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'780 horses' in Bohol turn heads of smallest of primates

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LGUs can lead battle vs cyber crime, says exec

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Plea to my Peers: First prize, Kabataan essay Palanca Awards for Literature

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Michael Jackson begged to sleep with my son, mother testifies

Retired general comes down from P22-M Essensa tower

KAWAWA NAMAN!

By Fe Zamora

WELCOME back to the 'hood.

From the exclusive high-rise Essensa and Paseo Parkview Towers, retired Lt. Gen. Jacinto

RETIRED/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Another broadcaster shot; victim in critical condition

KABACAN, North Cotabato—Another member of the media was shot by a yet unknown gunman just as police were announcing that the murder of Tacurong City journalist Marlene Esperat had been solved. *(Story on this page.)*

Alberto Martinez of Radyo Natin, a station affiliated with the Manila Broadcasting Co.,

ANOTHER/ A4

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Wednesday, April 13, 2005 ★★★ 72 pages / 8 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 124 P18

website: www.inq7.net

DOJ to PNP: You're wrong

2 sets of suspects in Esperat slay

By Armand N. Nocum and Luige A. del Puerto

CONTRARY to the claim of the Central Mindanao police, the case of the murder of crusading journalist Marlene Esperat is far from solved, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

Gonzalez told reporters there could be an entirely new set of people behind the killing of Esperat other than the four men earlier tagged by police and the National Bureau of Investigation.

"Our prosecutor in Sultan Kudarat said they had gotten an extrajudicial confession from a suspect who recruited the four arrested for the killing of Esperat," Gonzalez said, adding that a Department of Agriculture (DA) "budget officer" and another unnamed employee were the possible masterminds.

Esperat's alleged assassins were presented to the media yesterday at Camp Crame.

Chief Supt. Antonio Billones, head of the Central Mindanao Police, personally accompanied them on Philippine Airlines flight PR 454 from General Santos City, which arrived at the Centennial Terminal shortly after noon.

The handcuffed suspects, along with their police escorts, emerged from the aircraft after all the other passengers had disembarked.

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes

DOJ TO PNP/ A4

VAL HANDUMON

ARE THEY or aren't they? Police present four suspects in the Esperat killing. From left, Randi Grecia (alleged lookout), Jerry Cabayag (alleged gunman), Estanislao Vismanos Jr. and Sgt. Rowie Barua.

Sex scandals doom prospects of US pope

By Lito B. Zulueta

VATICAN CITY—The uproar in the United States over the Vatican's choice of Cardinal Bernard Law, who resigned as archbishop of Boston over his poor handling of the clerical sex-abuse crisis, to celebrate a Mass this week in honor of Pope John Paul II dimmed prospects for an American pope, American clerics and religious based here said.

"I think it would be hard on the Catholic people at this time to have an American pope," said Fr. Jerry Stookey, a top American Dominican based here. "You would think it's a feather in their (Americans') cap for an American to become pope, but no. If he has to deal with problems in his diocese, with a whole group of people who are angry with him, then he

SEX SCANDALS/ A6

Taxmen cometh for ladies with J-Lo butts

By Michael Lim Ubac

A BILL imposing a 20-percent excise tax on liposuction and other cosmetic surgery was unanimously approved by the House of Representatives committee on ways and means yesterday.

Jesli Lapus (NPC, Tarlac), chair of the committee, said the measure also imposed the same tax rate on "non-essential items and services" based on their selling price or value of importation as declared by the Bureau of Customs.

The committee approved the measure in an executive session.

Considered non-essential

TAXMEN/ A21

THE LOVED ONES Ted Borlongan left behind: Wife Dolly Borlongan and daughter Stephanie, their faces like masks of an unspeakable grief during the wake at Christ the King Church in Greenmeadows, Quezon City. (Below, left) A wife's lamentation, a last caress. (Below, right) The Borlongan women with sons Christopher and Jonathan. The eldest daughter Kathy is expected to arrive from Paris shortly.

PHOTOS BY REM ZAMORA

KATHY
DAD
DOLLY

He was last seen seated on his mother's tomb

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Doris C. Dumlao

THE LAST time Teodoro "Ted" Borlongan was seen alive was noon of Monday.

The sun was high, the heat was intense, but the former president of Urban Bank was seated on his mother's tomb at the Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina City.

"He sat there alone. I was wondering why because it was very hot," a caretaker told the INQUIRER.

The caretaker said she personally knew Borlongan because she was once assigned to look after the graves of his parents, Anna and Eliseo, and his brother, Daniel.

By nightfall, the news had spread that Borlongan had been found dead in his Nissan pickup, which was parked a few meters from where his loved ones are buried.

Borlongan died by his own hand as a result of severe depression over the Urban Bank fallout, according to sources in the industry. He was to have turned 50 on Friday—one of the youngest Filipino bankers to become president of a universal bank.

He left a wife, Dolly, and four children.

Police yesterday conducted a reenactment of what could have

HE WAS/ A9

Entire Abra police force dismissed to contain violence

By Norman Bordadora and Luige A. del Puerto

IN THE most drastic measure yet to deal with the reported "reign of terror" in the province, Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes has ordered the replacement of the entire provincial police force of Abra and removed control and supervision over the police from the governor and town mayors.

The directive came after a fact-finding team reported that the provincial police force was inept, and that private armies maintained by local government executives were behind the recent spate of violence and political tension in the province.

A member of the fact-finding

ENTIRE/ A9

Paper union drops case vs Teddyboy

By Alcuin Papa

THE EMPLOYEES union of the former Manila Standard has withdrawn its complaint before the Philippine Press Institute against Manila Standard Today publisher and Makati Rep. Teodoro "Teddyboy" Locsin Jr., saying they have resolved their issues.

Antonio Macapagal, president of the Manila Standard Employees Association (MSEA), sent a letter to PPI chair Amado "Jake" Macasaet yesterday withdrawing the complaint filed on March 21 alleging that Locsin's dual positions as representative of Makati City's first district and publisher of the Manila Standard Today constituted a conflict of interest.

Macapagal based the conflict-

PAPER/ A4

RP 'scolds' US diplomat who compared Mindanao to Afghanistan

By Volt Contreras and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

WITH the scolding he just got from the Philippine government, US Charge d'Affaires Joseph Mussomeli must have felt as if he'd been under fire in Afghanistan.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) summoned the diplomat yesterday to hand over a note verbale expressing "deep concern" over his recent Australian TV interview describing parts of Mindanao as "lawless," their borders "porous," and at "risk of becoming like an Afghanistan situation."

But in an interview on his way to answer the summons, Mussomeli maintained he had "nothing to apologize for," saying that the TV interview contained "not a single criticism" of his host government and the Filipino people.

"Have you read the transcript?" the second-ranking American diplomat in Manila asked reporters. "That's not what

RP SCOLDS/ A21

Shooting mars Quiapo presscon of Muslim peace leaders

By Margaux C. Ortiz

NOBODY knew what was coming.

While leaders of the National Muslim Peace and Order Council (NMPOC) were busy condemning what they said were "malicious and irresponsible" statements by US Charge d'Affaires Joseph Mussomeli at a press conference in Quiapo yesterday, the husband of the barangay chief allegedly led his men in firing warning shots to express their annoyance at the affair's organizers.

NMPOC chair Datu Amerol

SHOOTING/ A21

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/04/13/05

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Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Yap denies pushing agri deal

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur C. Yap yesterday denied that he was "pushing" a large agriculture project in Agusan del Sur involving the use of coconut levy funds.

He deplored Philippine Coconut Authority administrator Evangeline Valbuena for "insinuating in the media" that her threatened removal from the PCA was related to her disapproval of the Agusan Reserve Area Development Project and Yap's alleged support for it.

"That is completely false. We are not pushing for this project. I am not even inclined to make any recommendation because this is a major project and the PCA has yet to complete the necessary staff work for its proper evaluation," Yap said.

He denied having exerted undue pressure on Valbuena concerning the Agusan project. He said he had directed her on numerous occasion to coordinate with all sectors involved, including the local government heads and the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF).

"The allegation that I am pressuring her due to the Agusan project is not true and exists as a figment of her imagination," he said.

Yap said neither Valbuena nor the PCA had furnished him or his office with any memorandums of staff reports expressing the views which Valbuena disclosed to the media "which was in itself unethical and a serious breach in operational protocol and professional courtesy."

Yap said he knew of the Agusan project but was not ready to make a recommendation on it.

YAP

"The Presidential Proclamation on the nationwide coconut replanting program issued in 1981 requires a study to be made by the PCA and the CIIF for any project to be implemented in Agusan. I agree on consultation and thorough study of the project. This was exactly why we signed the memorandum of understanding [in October 2004]," he said.

Leonardo Q. Montemayor, chair of the UCPB-CIIF Finance and Devt. Corp. (Cocofinance), said in a statement that Valbuena's concerns have been thoroughly discussed and answered in previous dialogues on the Agusan project. Cocofinance is one of the project's proponents.

"The project is basically still in its conceptualization and consultation stage," Montemayor said.

Under the MOU singed by PCA, the CIIF and Cocofinance, a feasibility study has to be prepared and approved by the boards of these agencies and the President before the project can begin, he said. *Christine A. Gaylican*

JOURNALISM AWARDEES. Diosa Labiste (left photo) receives the second runner-up award while Jofelle P. Tesorio (right) receives the honorable mention award in the 2005 Developing Asia Journalism Awards from one of the judges, Suvendrini Kakuchi of Sri Lanka. Labiste and Tesorio are the INQUIRER's correspondents in Iloilo and Palawan, respectively.

2 PDI correspondents win Asian journalism awards

TWO INQUIRER correspondents won in the 2nd Developing Asia Journalism Awards (Daja) held recently at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Tokyo.

Ma. Diosa Labiste, who is based in Iloilo was second runner-up while Jofelle P. Tesorio, who is based in Puerto Princesa City, got honorable mention in the "People and Development" category of the awards. Last year, Tesorio was first runner-up in the "Role of Private Sector in Development" category.

The two were the only Filipino entries in the awards.

Labiste won for her stories, "Iloilo's Farm School without walls" and "Freeing a Clipped Tongue," while Tesorio won for "Oil Palms: Palawan's Blessing or Curse?" and "Planned Hotel on Tiny Sandbar Opposed." The articles appeared in the INQUIRER last year.

Sponsored by the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), the research arm of the Asian Development Bank based in Tokyo, the Daja 2005 drew 17 finalists from Pakistan, India, Malaysia, China, Vietnam, Fiji Islands, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal and the Philippines. They were chosen from more than 140 entrants all over Asia and the Pacific.

The awards recognize excellence in journalistic reporting by those covering development trends and issues in the region.

Cash prizes, ranging from US$500 to US$1,500, were given to the winners and runners-up for reporting in any of four strategic areas of development—women and development, poverty issues, development agencies and development, and people and development.

Other winners in the last category were Massoud Ansari (Pakistan), Liu Wei Feng (China), Lalitha Sridhar (India) and Amer Farooq (Pakistan).

The winners were chosen by a jury composed of Anthony Rowley, Tokyo correspondent of the Business Times of Singapore and field editor for Oxford Analytica, presiding judge; Yoshio Murakami, adviser on International Affairs to the Asahi Shimbun; Suvendrini Kakuchi, Sri Lankan reporter for Inter Press Service; and Monzurul Huq, Tokyo correspondent for Daily Star and Prothom Alo of Bangladesh.

Rowley said the Daja entrants had shone a light into dark places where grinding poverty and crippling disease still lurked in certain parts of Asia.

"They have shown us a side of life where exploitation, corruption and crime still cripple the lives of so many of the region's poor," he said. "And they have once again reminded us that no matter how much the developing community is doing to reduce poverty and relieve suffering there is a very long road to travel in this direction."

ADB Institute Dean Peter McCawley said the awards were part of his organization's support for improved governance in Asia and the Pacific.

Probe of coco-funded Agusan project sought

ADMINISTRATION Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. yesterday urged the Senate to investigate how the multi-billion-peso coconut levy fund was being spent after a P8.4-billion project involving the use of the funds for a project in Agusan del Sur erupted into controversy.

In a Senate resolution, Magsaysay cited reports that Philippine Coconut Authority administrator Evangeline Valbuena was being pressured to resign after she refused to support the use of the coco levy funds for the Agusan Reserve Area Development Project.

In filing Senate Resolution No. 22, Magsaysay said that reports that Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap had been "pushing the PCA" to approve the project should be investigated "for reasons of transparency and better governance".

Magsaysay noted the League of Provinces's opposition to the project because of the huge amount involved and because of the fact that Agusan del Sur was not even a coconut-producing province.

"It is incumbent upon government to satisfactorily exercise transparency in the utilization and management of the coconut levy funds which are evidently affected with public interest," said Magsaysay who chairs the Senate committee on agriculture.

Magsaysay said the coco levy funds, a tax extracted from coconut farmers during the regime of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, must support the growth of the coconut industry and the livelihood of coconut farmers to improve the economy.

On Monday, Valbuena pointed to Yap as the one actively pushing for the Agusan project which is intended to produce high-yielding coconut seeds.

She claimed having received text messages from Renato Velasco, director general of the Philippine Information Agency, on the first week of April, asking for her formal resignation from PCA.

House legislators yesterday rallied behind Valbuena, supporting her opposition to the project.

Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales and Anakpawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano urged Congress to investigate administration officials' insistence on using the levy funds for the Agusan project.

"In her words, Valbuena wants transparency and participation. For such intentions, one cannot understand why there is so much heat coming Valbuena's way, even all the way from Malacañang," Rosales said.

Rosales said Valbuena's stand against the project protected the interests "of millions of coconut farmers" against "a dubious proposal which will draw from the levy that was exacted from them in the first place."

Mariano urged the committee on agriculture to investigate the project which he branded as "fishy."

"Malacañang's hell-bent insistence to push for the P8.4 billion coco project despite opposition from the PCA, the League of Provinces, and coconut farmers groups raises doubts that a shady deal is in place," he said.

The militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas similarly smelled something fishy.

"The money may be diverted to GMA's [President Macapagal-Arroyo's] coffers," said KMP spokesperson Willy Marbella.

Mariano said that the main proponent of the project, the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) oil mills group, was "notorious in the coco levy fund scam during the Marcos regime."

"This coco project will pave the way for the political resurrection of Danding's (Eduardo Cojuangco Jr.) men to further stregthen his control over the coco levy funds," he said.

Cojuangco, who was appointed administrator of the coconut levy by Marcos, has been charged with acquiring shares and companies using coco levy funds.

Rosales said the controversy over the Agusan project should be seen in the light of other controversial DA projects like the GMA Rice Program.

She claimed that journalist Marlene Esperat was killed after she exposed irregularities in the GMA Rice Program. *Juliet Labog-Javellana, Philip C. Tubeza and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Police colonel, 2 others slain in ambush

COTABATO CITY—A police colonel and two of his men were killed in an ambush by an unknown group in Tugaya, Lanao del Sur Tuesday afternoon.

Killed on the spot were Supt. Ferdinand Tiqui, chief of the Traffic Management Group in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, SPO2 Ruben Malidas and PO1 Cerilo Cariaga, Tiqui's relative and personal driver.

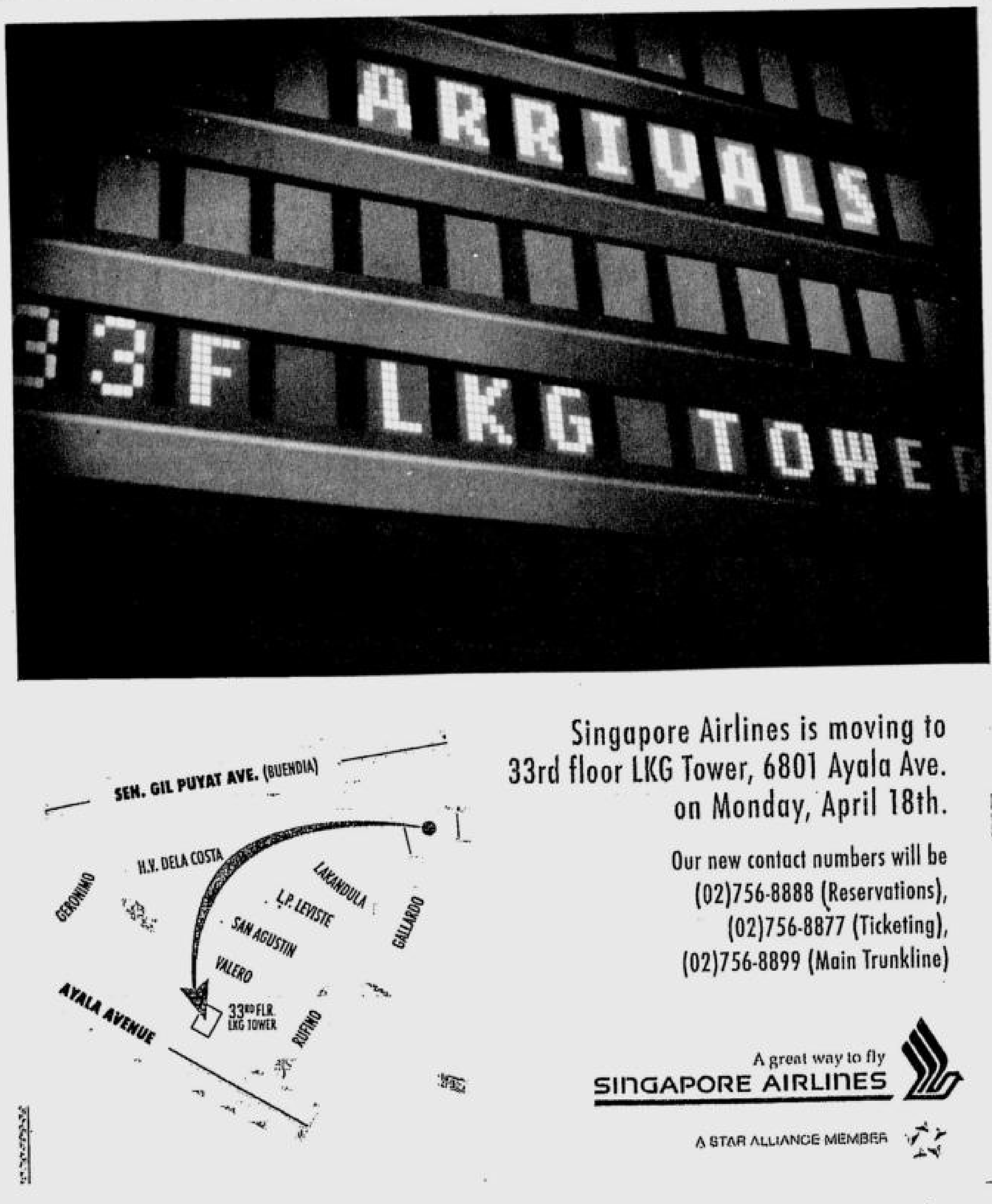
Wounded were PO1 Ibrahim Kapampangan, Aying Gallego, a hitchhiker and two other unidentified traffic police officers.

Senior Insp. Philip Tumaclas, TMG-ARMM deputy chief, said Tiqui and his men were heading toward Cotabato City where his office is located when waylaid by about 30 heavily armed men at about 2 p.m. in the hinterlands town of Tugaya.

"The ambushers, according to survivors, positioned on both sides and apparently waited for our colleagues to pass by," Tumaclas told Radio dxMS here. Eid Kabalu, speaking for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, said his group had no hand in it.

"We are not at war with the police," Kabalu said. "May be it has something to do with the anti-carnapping operations of the TMG," he said. "Or may be *rido* (family feud)."

He volunteered that the MILF officials in Lanao del Sur have been directed to help track down the ambushers. *Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



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FPJ POLL PROTEST

Opposition concedes defeat, eyes other options

By Michael Lim Ubac, Gil C. Cabacungan, Jr. and Cynthia D. Balana

ROCES

ALMOST one year after the hotly-contested May 2004 elections won by President Macapagal-Arroyo by one of the slimmest margins, the opposition has virtually admitted that it has lost its battle.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said yesterday that the "legal battle to open the ballots and count them through the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) is closed."

"Insofar as the PET is concerned, we already accepted that the PET option to use that as a vehicle to open the ballots and find out who won is closed. *Tanggap namin ang katotohanang 'yon.* (We have already accepted that.) That's the reality," he said.

But Escudero, secretary general of the recently-launched United Opposition, quickly pointed out that although the legal battle was lost, the fight of ordinary Filipinos against an abusive and corrupt administration would continue.

Escudero did not rule out the possibility of Poe supporters taking to the streets. "These options are all open and it had been done in the past. We just have to see what will happen in the coming weeks," he said.

A day earlier, actress Susan Roces, the widow of opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., finally abandoned her bid to substitute for her late husband in the electoral protest filed with the Supreme Court, saying "Enough is enough."

Roces' decision not to contest the SC ruling was immediately welcomed by both Malacañang and administration congressmen.

"We are impressed by the decision made by Ms Susan Roces and we are sure she considered what is best for our country," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

Ms Arroyo herself refused to comment on Roces' decision during a briefing yesterday.

But her legal counsel said the President felt finally relieved that the last obstacle to her presidency has been removed.

"The President is very happy about the decision of Susan Roces. As a matter of fact, I had her attend the mass in Our Lady of Fatima parish in Las Piñas last Sunday for thanksgiving," said lawyer Romulo Macalintal, lead counsel of the President in the election protest.

But Escudero clarified that legal defeat was not due to actress Roces' decision not to file a motion for reconsideration to the March 29 ruling of the high court junking her bid to substitute for FPJ.

"It's not Susan Roces who surrendered or throw in the towel. It was the Supreme Court (whose members compose the PET) who stopped her," said Escudero.

In her manifestation filed with the SC Monday, Roces "expressed disgust" over the high court decision, he said.

"She disagrees completely with the decision. She thinks that another decision contrary to what was handed down should have been made by the Supreme Court. But she also accepts the fact that the court has closed its doors. Now let it not be said that she's throwing in the towel," he added.

Malacañang, however, ignored Roces' resentment over the PET decision. "I believe the overall effect would be the lessening of tension and for this we are grateful," Bunye said.

At the Senate, opposition Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said yesterday that Roces made the right move.

"I think that Susan Roces... was correct in taking the position she has taken," he said. "I think, realistically speaking, it would have been very difficult to expect a reversal of that decision of the Supreme Court," he told reporters.

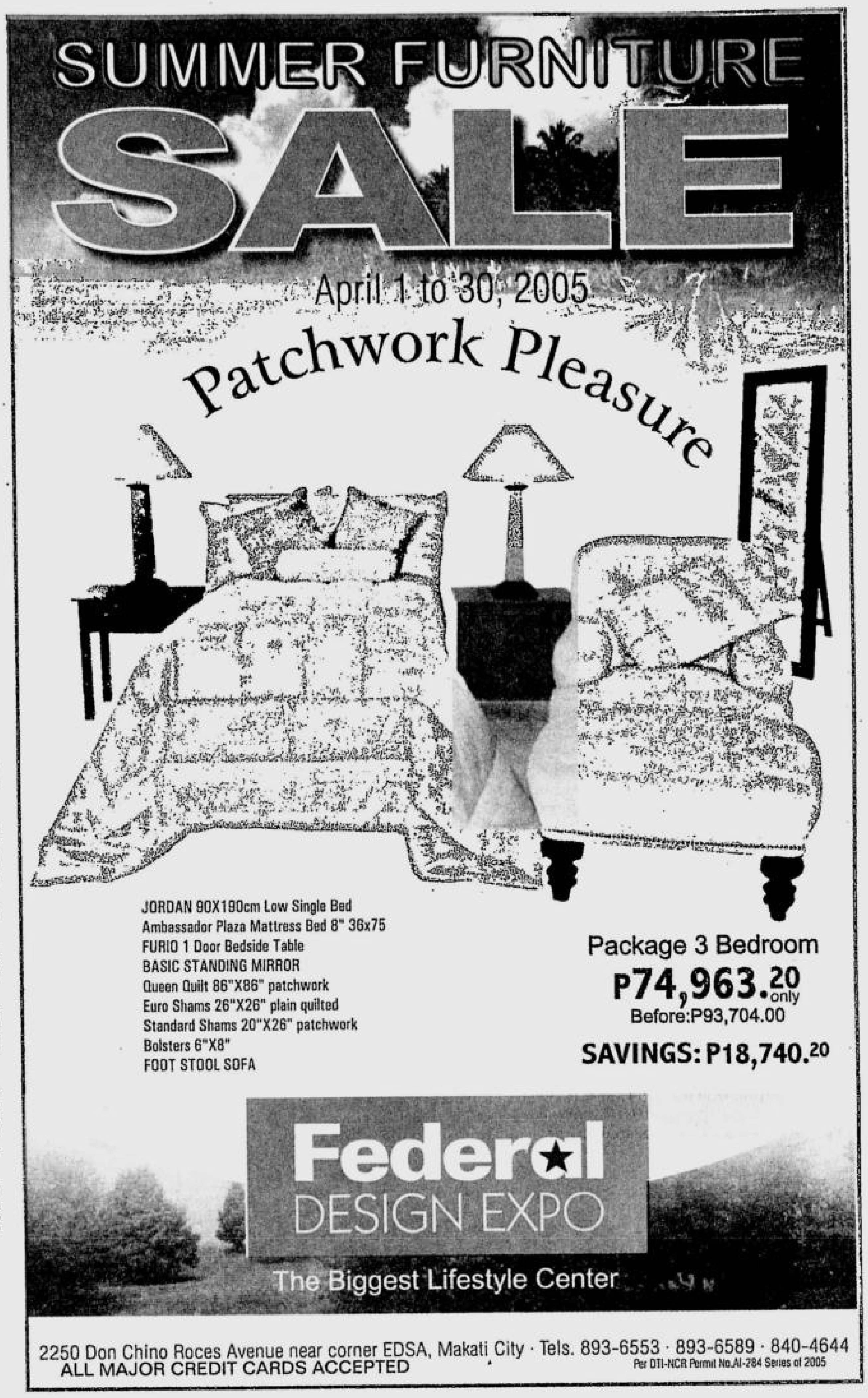
Sen. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito said that Ms Roces' decision "should be respected."

"Deep in the minds of the people it's clear who won the elections," added Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

In a statement, Lakas-CMD Reps. Edwin Uy (Isabela) and Antonio Cuenco (Cebu) said that Roces' decision provided a "full and selfless closure" on the issue.

"It will serve no purpose if their supporters take their fight to the streets, especially if they continue ignoring the truth about President Arroyo's victory which has long been proclaimed," Uy said.

Cuenco said Roces' decision showed her respect for the rule of law and the Supreme Court. *With reports from TJ Burgonio and Philip C. Tubeza*



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Sandigan OKs Erap visit by show biz pals

By Nelson Flores

THE SANDIGANBAYAN yesterday allowed Fernando Poe Jr.'s widow, actress Susan Roces, and other show biz personalities to visit deposed president Joseph Estrada at his rest house in Tanay, Rizal where he is currently detained on plunder charges.

The anti-graft court decision came after the Philippine National Police withdrew its opposition to an earlier motion filed by Estrada's lawyer Rene Saguisag seeking the court's permission for the planned visit by Roces and other movie personalities.

The court, however, limited the visiting hours to only 8 p.m.

The PNP had opposed Saguisag's motion, citing the lack of manpower and funds for the proposed visit.

It was the first time that the PNP opposed a motion of this nature filed by the defense panel.

The PNP said it's resources are devoted to the antiterrorism campaign of the government.

Saguisag said the proposed visit was meant to celebrate Estrada's 68th birthday in advance and to inaugurate the memorabilia of his friend, the late FPJ.

In withdrawing its opposition to Saguisag's motion, the PNP assured the security of the former president and his visitors.

Saguisag expressed elation over the decision of the Sandiganbayan granting his motion.

He said there was no reason for the PNP to oppose the planned visit, noting that the basis of its oppositions was purely speculative and farfetched.

"Ang security risk lang doon ay si Eddie Garcia pero sa pelikula lang yon," Saguisag said with a laugh.

He added that it was totally unfounded to brand Roces, Dolphy, and other show biz supporters of the former president who plan to visit him as security risk.

"Ms Roces is a symbol of orderliness and calm. In fact, she already withdrew her electoral protest to avoid anymore trouble. She deserved this visit," Saguisag said.

Lawyer Jose Flaminiano, a member of Estrada's legal panel, expressed surprise at the decision of the Sandiganbayan.

He expressed a similar view with Saguisag, but stressed that the PNP's fears were unfounded.

"Sa layo noon, sinong pupunta roon, (It's that far, so who will go there)" Flaminiano said.

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DOJ to PNP: You're wrong

From page A1

identified the gunman as Jerry Cabayag. He said the two men who had earlier surrendered to authorities and led investigators to the other suspects—Estanislao Vismanos Jr. and Randy Grecia—served as lookouts.

He said it was Rowie Barua, a soldier, who had hired the other three and who had given them the money.

"They were paid P120,000," Reyes said.

"What we have are the executioners. The investigation is ongoing, and we are confident that we would be able to identify the masterminds later on," he said.

According to Billones, Barua (not Owen Bancare, as earlier reported) is a sergeant in the Army.

Not part of probe

Quoting Grecia, NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco had named Sumail Sekkak, a former DA regional director in Central Mindanao, as being behind Esperat's murder.

But Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao neither confirm nor deny this, saying the NBI was not part of the investigation.

"The participation of the NBI is in the autopsy," Lomibao said. "They were not part of the investigation. So I do not know where that NBI officer or personnel got that information."

Told that it was Wycoco who had disclosed the information, Lomibao said: "I don't know how the information got to him. I'm sorry to say that he was not part of the investigation."

Even Gonzalez said he had "reservations" about police statements naming Sekkak as the mastermind.

"Our state prosecutor says it's not Sekkak," he said, adding that the one who had tagged Sekkak was only a lookout.

On the other hand, their new suspect is the one who hired the four alleged killers, Gonzalez said. He said this new suspect was hired by "somebody else."

Reminded by reporters that Esperat had filed about 15 cases against local and national officials, Gonzalez phoned Wycoco and instructed him to "look deeper into the case."

He also told Wycoco to "clarify all the discrepancies" involving the masterminds.

Among those sued by Esperat before the Office of the Ombudsman were Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, Undersecretary Cesar Drilon, former Undersecretary Jocelyn Bolante, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay, Mindanao Deputy Ombudsman Antonio Valenzuela and Rep. Lino Montilla.

The charges against them involve overpricing and juggling of funds in connection with the purchase of fertilizer, smuggling of chicken quarters, and electoral fraud, among other things.

"Maybe all these things should be looked into," Gonzalez said.

Easy confession

Police said it did not take long before Cabayag, the alleged gunman, confessed to the crime.

"We were surprised ... He started confessing on the night we arrested him," said Supt. Danilo Galapon, one of the investigators who picked up Cabayag from a house in Panabo City on April 8.

"The next day, that's when he really confessed it all. He said he did it, and he was bothered by his conscience," Galapon said.

Billones said Grecia had confirmed Cabayag's statements.

At the presentation yesterday, Cabayag wore a smirk on his face as he faced cameramen and reporters.

"We're happy to say that we took a special interest in this case [because] it was a member of the media [who was killed]," Secretary Reyes said. "We have reasons to believe the crime was committed ... in [connection with her] pursuit of her profession."

Murder charges filed

Reyes also said Esperat's murder was "an attack not only on an individual, but [also] on press freedom."

Lawyer Nena Santos, private prosecutor for the Esperat family, said murder charges were filed yesterday against the four suspects before the sala of Judge Francis Palmones of the Regional Trial Court Branch 20 in Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat.

Santos said that at the inquest, the four requested that they be put in the protective custody of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group while awaiting a commitment order from the court.

She said the four feared for their lives.

On March 27, Maundy Thursday, Esperat's killer casually walked into her house in Tacurong, wished her a good evening, and shot her in the head.

She died on the spot.

Inday Espina-Varona, chair of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, yesterday said the killing of Esperat and other members of the media could only be considered solved with the conviction of the masterminds and others involved.

"In the first place, [authorities] would not even say who the mastermind was. Uncovering the mastermind is the most important thing at this time," Varona said.

Personal involvement

Representatives of the group Reporters Without Borders said "it helped a lot" that Lomibao had taken a personal interest in Esperat's case.

"When the PNP chief visited Tacurong, he showed that he was personally involved. It helped a lot because it put pressure on the investigators," Vincent Brossel told the INQUIRER. "Let us see if he can do the same for all the other cases [involving the killing of journalists]."

The media in Manila have also put pressure on the police, according to Julliard Jef.

The two Frenchmen flew to Tacurong last weekend and spoke with members of Esperat's family, her friends and investigators.

They made a "very long" list of possible masterminds.

"She filed so many cases, and wrote critical articles about many persons, so we only concentrated on what she had written recently," they said. *With reports from Nikko Dizon in Manila; Aquiles Z. Zonio and Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Another broadcaster shot ...

From page A1

was heading home on a motorcycle at about 8 p.m. on Sunday when he was shot in the back, according to Insp. Abello Jungaya, police chief of Kabacan.

The attack was not reported until yesterday.

Jungaya said Martinez had just concluded his hour-long commentary program when the ambush occurred.

Martinez, 46, was first taken to a hospital in Kabacan, but the INQUIRER learned that he had been moved to another medical center outside of North Cotabato and remained in critical condition.

Protestant pastor

Police said they were investigating if the attack was related to Martinez's hard-hitting campaign against corruption.

They said Martinez, who is also a Protestant pastor, had constantly talked about unfinished government projects in North Cotabato.

Inday Espina-Varona, chair of the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines, said the attempt on Martinez's life was "very sad."

"Marlene just died recently and here comes another case," Varona said, and urged police to dig deeper into the motive behind the slay attempt. *Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Retired general comes down from P22-M ...

From page A1

Ligot has moved to a government-owned, medium-rise condominium building in Taguig City, according to anti-corruption probers of Ligot's alleged P66-million unexplained wealth.

Ligot's wife reportedly owns the 290-sq.m. unit at Essensa Towers with a price tag of P22 million. A 60-sq.m. unit at the Bonifacio Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) is priced at P500,000, according to a BCDA staffer who requested anonymity.

Ligot was tracked down by investigators to the BCDA in Diego Silang, Taguig City, after the former military comptroller chief stopped going to his other "known addresses," one of the investigators told the INQUIRER.

Canceled purchase

It was also learned that Ligot had bought a unit at Bonifacio Ridge, another high-priced condominium near Essensa Towers, "but he cancelled the contract in January," the investigator said.

A 113-sq.m. two-bedroom residential unit at Bonifacio Ridge costs between P7 million and P11 million, "depending on the view," one of its marketing representatives said.

A BCDA staffer confirmed that Ligot was listed as the lease-owner of Unit 201, Building MC 14 on 24th St., Diego Silang, Taguig City.

Only for gov't workers

Intended solely for government employees, the BCDA condominium units at Diego Silang were awarded to soldiers and policemen who used to reside in the military and police housing area in Fort Bonifacio.

Bonifacio Ridge and the BCDA are both located in the former Army camp which still houses the headquarters of the Philippine Army.

Ligot retired last year with a monthly salary of at least P35,000.

Ligot, who preceded Maj. Gen Carlos Garcia as AFP comptroller, had been charged with perjury before the Ombudsman for failure to declare his true statement of assets and liabilities. He was also charged with unexplained wealth, which is a violation of the code of ethics for government officials under RA 1376.

During a hearing conducted by the House committee on national defense and security in January, the former military comptroller invoked his constitutional right and refused to answer questions about his alleged ill-gotten wealth.

US property

Committee documents, however, showed that Ligot had bought a house at 7102 Stanton Ave., Buena Park, California, for $183,868 in 2002, and another house at 1240 Cabernet Circle, Anaheim, California, for $504,000 in December 2003.

The documents showed that Ligot also owned a resthouse and poultry in Barangay Imbayao, Malaybalay, Bukidnon, worth at least P5 million, and farm lots in Malaybalay estimated at P166,035.

Corrections

THE STORY, "BIR exceeds collection goal" (10/19/04) on Page B6, misstated that the BIR September 2004 collection of P33.746 billion was 14.45 percent higher than the P29 billion collected during the same period in 2003. It was 16.37 percent higher. The amount of P343.484 billion was also misstated as being higher than P376.801 billion when it should have been lower.

* * *

IN THE column Separate Opinion ("Packing the House of Representatives," 11/29/04), on Page A14, it was misstated that the Philippines is smaller than Omaha City in Nebraska, USA. The Philippines has a total land area of 115,800 square miles compared to Omaha City's 115.7 square miles.

* * *

IN THE column Inside Out ("Tips for a happy and healthy New Year," 12/28/04), on Page C4, it was misstated that the alcohol content of beer is 40 percent. The alcohol content of most beers is only 3-5 percent.

* * *

THE CONTRIBUTED story, "If the North Luzon Expressway is OK now, why not the South?" (3/16/05) on Page C2, misstated that the NLEx is traversed by some 2,000 vehicles every day. According to the PNCC, about 150,000 vehicles pass through the expressway daily and the number should increase to 180,000 after the MNTC takeover.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses:glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Raul Palabrica, readers' advocate, the same address and fax numbers as those of the city editor, and e-mail address:rpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph.

Paper union drops case vs Teddyboy

From page A1

of-interest violations on at least three provisions of the Philippine Journalists' Code of Ethics instituted and enforced by the PPI.

Manila Standard Today is a broadsheet that combined the Manila Standard, which is majority-owned by businessman Enrique Razon, and Today, which Locsin owned with businessmen Manuel Zamora and Antonio Cojuangco.

The merger was announced to Standard employees on March 6 in a meeting with Locsin.

Agreement on issues

"The Association and the Management of the paper have come to an agreement regarding the issues that precipitated the filing of the complaint, which has now been overtaken by intervening events," Macapagal wrote.

He explained that the union "is convinced that Management will respect the security of tenure and other benefits of Association members, who are employees of the former Manila Standard."

At the time the union filed its complaint with the PPI, it expressed concerns that Standard employees would be laid off to make way for Today employees and that new employees would not be made to undergo the mandated six-month probationary period before becoming regular employees.

This brings to a probable close the conflict between the two camps.

In defense of Locsin

Lourdes Molina-Fernandez, former Today editor in chief and co-managing editor of the merged broadsheet, defended Locsin from accusations that being publisher and legislator at the same time was a "conflict of interest," saying he had never meddled in the "treatment of stories" when he was publisher of Today.

Last week, Fernandez turned in her resignation, saying the animosity between Standard and Today employees had affected the discharge of her duties.

It was not known if management had accepted her resignation.

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Loren must be dreaming, says Noli's lawyer

MACALINTAL

By Cynthia D. Balana

FORMER Sen. Loren Legarda must have been dreaming when she claimed she won in the six provinces she had identified for a recount of votes in her election protest against Vice President Noli de Castro, lawyer Romulo Macalintal said yesterday.

Macalintal, who is one of De Castro's lawyers and his spokesperson, said Legarda's claim that she would be able to overtake De Castro's over 800,000-vote lead in at least three of the provinces was baseless.

"I don't know the basis of her claim because it is highly impossible to say she would be able to recover. How did she know she would be leading by 400,000 votes in Maguindanao alone when she has not seen a single ballot box opened?" Macalintal told the INQUIRER.

"We should wait until the ballot boxes are opened, and we are confident . . . the result will not materially affect the outcome of the May 2004 elections," Macalintal said.

Macalintal was the lead counsel of President Macapagal-Arroyo in the congressional canvassing of votes and in the election protest filed by the late presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. against her. The protest was later dismissed by the Supreme Court, sitting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal.

In a manifestation filed by Legarda with the PET, she named Cebu, Pampanga and Maguindanao as provinces where "massive electoral frauds" took place.

She identified Lanao del Sur, Surigao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi as provinces where "manifest electoral errors" were committed.

Legarda said her lawyers had actually identified 44 provinces where massive fraud was allegedly committed and another 11 provinces where manifest errors were recorded.

The PET will first order the opening of the ballot boxes from the six pilot provinces where Legarda believes she was cheated to determine if there is basis to proceed with the recount of votes in the other questioned provinces.

Macalintal said the exercise was just a waste of money and the time of the Supreme Court justices "who have better things to do than this protest."

"It would be a very futile exercise in so far as we are concerned," he said, adding that the recount of votes in the six provinces would take at least one year and the rest of the questioned provinces, three years.

De Castro said he was eager to have the ballot boxes opened, and was confident his victory over Legarda would be upheld by the PET.

"Let's wait for the counting to start before we make any noise. As far as I'm concerned, I'm very confident that I won the elections last year," he said.

It's final: Sin can't make it to conclave

By Christian V. Esguerra

IT'S FINAL.

Former Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin won't be joining the conclave that will select the next pontiff.

In a statement, the Archdiocese of Manila yesterday said the prelate "will definitely not participate" in the conclave set to begin on Monday.

Sin will miss what would have been a rare chance of joining his third—and probably last—conclave. He was among the cardinals that chose John Paul I, who died 33 days into his papacy, and John Paul II in 1978.

The 76-year-old cardinal has been afflicted with a kidney disease that has constricted his mobility and required him to undergo regular dialysis.

Last week, he was still bent on flying to the Vatican, saying it was his "duty as a cardinal and as one of the leaders of the Philippine Church to be present during the events that would determine who would be the next Pontiff to lead the Catholic Church."

But a willing spirit was apparently not enough for him to endure the demands of a conclave, not to mention the 16-hour flight to Rome.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the Dean of the College of Cardinals and a leading "papabile," got wind of Sin's sentiments and excused him from the exhaustive process, the Archdiocese of Manila said yesterday.

"(He) has assured Cardinal Sin that, because of his physical condition, he is not morally obliged and therefore may be excused from attending the conclave," it said in the statement.

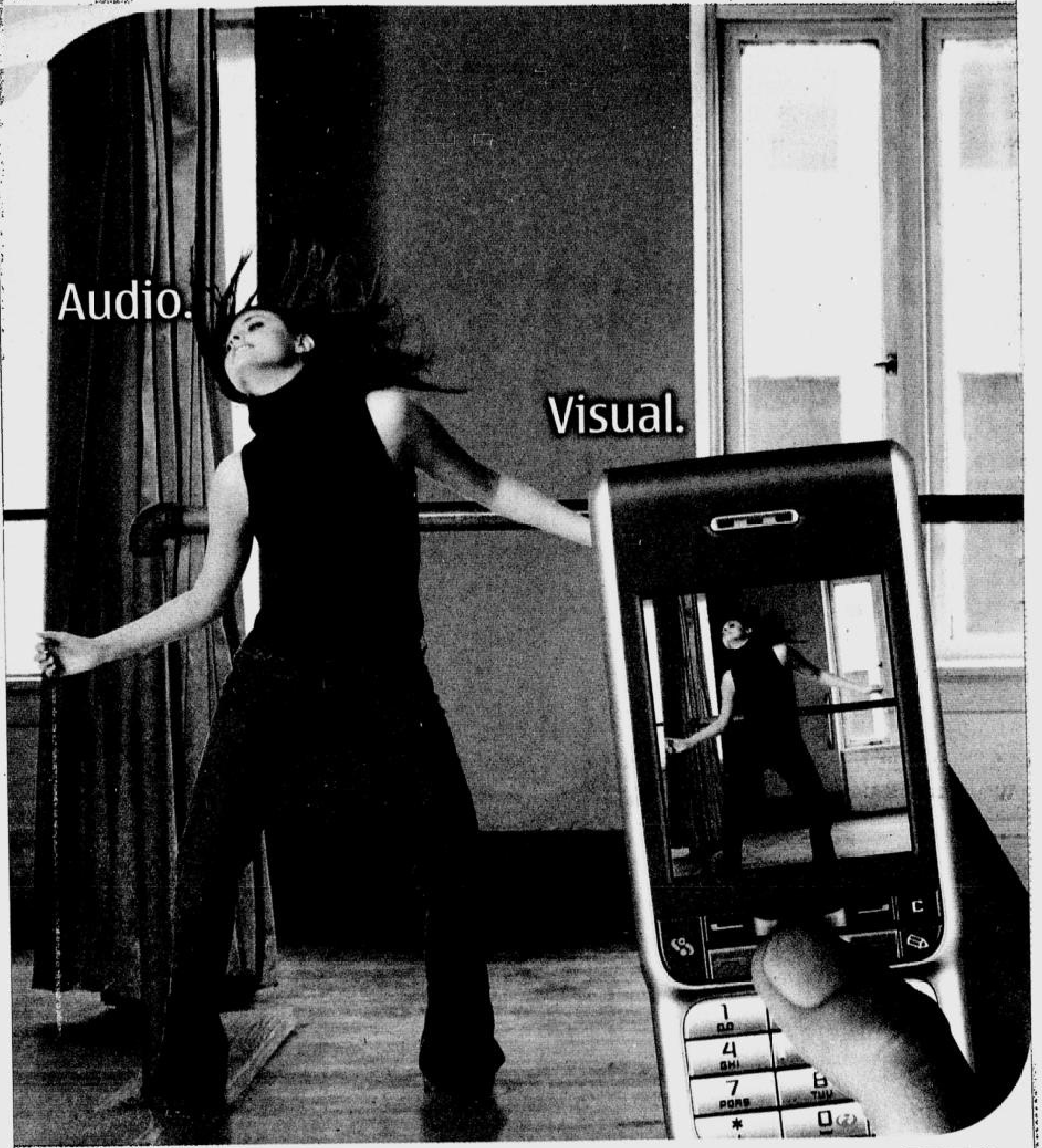
Ratzinger, whose message was coursed through the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Antonio Franco, cited "the infirmity of Cardinal Sin wherein he would have to undergo dialysis treatments during his stay in the Vatican."

The Cardinal Camerlengo and the three Cardinal Assistants of the Particular Congregation had been consulted on the matter, the German prelate told Sin.

"I understand very well your strong desire to be present and fulfill a right and duty to take part in the election of the new Pope," Franco told Sin.

"I join you in offering your sacrifice to the Good Lord, for the Church in this very important moment and for the next successor of St. Peter. I am sure that your sacrifice will be very beneficial in the discernment the cardinals present at the conclave will be called to make."

Sin's absence, however, won't mean that he could not get selected as John Paul's successor. It only left the Philippines with only one cardinal elector, Ricardo Cardinal Vidal of Cebu.



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Cardinals will have to contend with Muslims issue

ROME—By coincidence or not, many cardinals mentioned as candidates to be the next pope have strongly expressed positions on Islam, and on whether the Roman Catholic Church's relations with Muslims should be conciliatory or a notch more confrontational.

John Paul II had a consistent, even ground-breaking, strategy for addressing Islam: Talk at all costs, even if there were few concrete results. But in the Vatican, and especially since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, his unbudging advocacy of dialogue had long spawned criticism, mostly quiet, as being not muscular enough.

Now, although relations with Islam will not be the decisive issue for the 115 cardinals who will meet to select the next pope, the debate is seen as vital because it intersects centrally with other major issues facing the church: increasing secularism in Europe, contrasting with the religious revival in the Islamic world; relations with other religions; and the rising number of Muslim immigrants in Europe. The dwindling number of Christians in the Middle East is also a major concern.

It is clear that some in the church—among them cardinals who will vote for the new pope—see Islam as a threat and too much talk with Muslims as unproductive at a time when there is widespread concern about the need to revitalize Christianity.

John Paul reached out to Muslims like no other pope before him. He was the first on record to step inside a mosque, in Damascus in 2001, and he issued an apology for past misdeeds of the church that many have read to include the Crusades.

But some critics of religious dialogue contend that the fear of offending is so great that neither side talks about what it believes in most: that is, the truth of its religion, Christ as the son of God or Muhammad as the prophet of God. *New York Times News Service*

Sex scandals crisis dooms prospects of American pope

From page A1

wouldn't be the best pope."

An American pope may also be dragged into the legal mess faced by several American bishops over abusers in their clergy.

"(An American bishop) probably has so many headaches in his diocese that he has to deal with—a lot of financial and legal matters—that you don't want the pope to be dragged into," Stookey said.

Although Law is not a *papabile*, the Italian term for a perceived papal contender, he is eligible to vote and be voted as pope.

Law resigned from the Boston archdiocese on Dec. 13, 2002 over allegations he merely rotated priests who had a consistent record of abusing boys. The allegations were contained in multimillion-dollar suits filed by several victims who are now adults and have been on psychotherapy for depression, addiction or alcoholism.

Law resurfaced in public as the arch-priest of Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica, one of the four main papal churches in Rome, aside from St. Peter's Basilica, Lateran Church, and the Church of St. Paul Outside of the Walls.

Policing the priests

Last Thursday, Law welcomed President Macapagal-Arroyo to the Maggiore church during the Mass offered by the Filipino community in Rome for the deceased Pope. It was during that time that American pilgrims discovered that Law had been exiled to the Vatican and given a plum post.

"It reflects on the fact that they have no ability to police themselves. Their clericalism is first and foremost," said John Harris, 47, who claims to be a victim of convicted child molester and defrocked priest Paul Shanley. Harris made the remark over American television.

Law was succeeded by Sean O'Malley, who had gained renown for his firm handling of clerical sex abuses as bishop of Palm Beach. But he was not included in the last batch of cardinals in 2003.

There are 11 other American cardinals who will take part in the papal conclave. One of them is Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles, who is being questioned in American courts for allegedly endorsing a clerical abuser as bishop and shielding his priests from child-molestation suits.

Mahony's attorneys have been fighting off attempts by the Los Angeles district attorney's office to turn over documents related to church inquiry on clerical abuses. They have invoked the American rule on the Fifth Amendment, the right against self-incrimination, as well as the separation of church and state.

No outstanding candidates

Although the American Catholic church has 60 million members and is the most dominant Christian group in the United States, the possibility of an American ascending the papacy is remote because the sex scandals have tarred the American hierarchy, Rome-based clerics and religious said.

Jesuit Fr. Robert White of Rome's Gregorian University said the crisis might not affect an American's papal prospects as much as the lack of really "outstanding" candidates.

"The American cardinals just don't have it," White said.

Forgiving abusers but ...

Stookey, who assists the Dominican master general in handling North American and laity affairs, said Americans themselves are not ready for an American pope because they are bitter over the scandal.

"The Church has to face this crisis, and the American people and the American church must face it," Stookey said. "Emotionally it is a difficult time, so I am wondering if it would be good for them to say, let's have an American pope, while they themselves are upset with some of their bishops."

Stookey, who is from Chicago, a dominantly Catholic city, said that victims and their kin had generally been forgiving of the abusers. But they felt betrayed by the bishops for coddling the molesters over a long period of time. "They told the bishops, you broke the diocese, you undermined (the church's) credibility, and you mismanaged the church . . . you really messed up."

Unfair promotion

Stookey said the wounds had been revived now that Americans discovered that Law had been kicked upstairs. "He was moved all the way to the basilica," he said. "People who knew him believe he should not have been given a prestigious position."

The promotion may also alienate American Catholics from the Vatican. "People will again say, 'Back in our diocese we removed this priest, and even in some cases the bishop was removed or he resigned, so why would you at the Vatican level continue to do this?'"

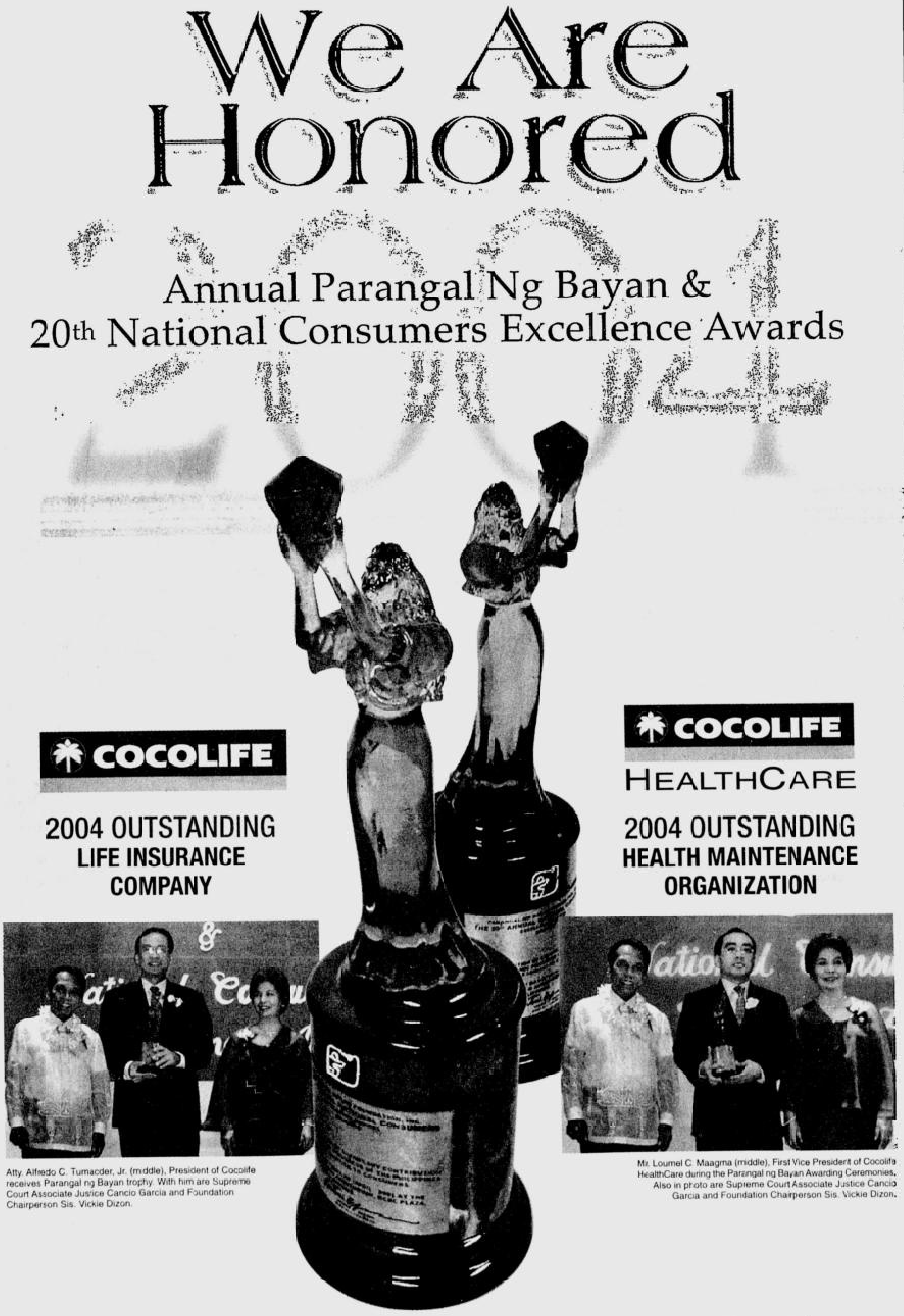
International distrust

Aside from the sex scandal, international distrust of America as a superpower means the world is not yet ready for an American to take over the papacy. He explained the administration of the American President George Bush has taken "arrogant" and "pro-war" positions on Iraq and international terrorism.

"I think it's a crime against humanity to resolve problems through violence," Stookey said. "It's stupid, Neanderthal, medieval, whatever your say it. I don't think Jesus believed in violence."

Awkward

"I always think that it would be an awkward position for someone from a superpower to be pope," the Dominican sociologist said. "I don't know if that would be the best thing for the Church."



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Atty. Alfredo C. Tumacder, Jr. (middle), President of Cocolife receives Parangal ng Bayan trophy. With him are Supreme Court Associate Justice Cancio Garcia and Foundation Chairperson Sis. Vickie Dizon.

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Justice going to the termites, DOJ chief admits

By Armand Nocum

IS THE COUNTRY'S justice system going to the termites?

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday admitted the government effort to have Rod Strunk extradited from the United States has been snagged by the destruction of the original copy of the extradition petition by termites.

Strunk is the suspected mastermind in the killing of his wife, actress Nida Blanca.

"It's an embarrassment to the present secretary of justice," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez admitted the loss of the documents as he announced that the Department of Justice would be making Strunk's extradition one of the "talking points" during US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's coming visit to the Philippines.

"We would like to tell the US to comply with the extradition treaty. There must be reciprocity in the extradition treaty," Gonzalez said, pointing out that the Philippines has extradited a number of individuals wanted in the US, but hardly any had come this way.

A US court dismissed on Nov. 12, 2003, the Philippine government petition seeking Strunk's extradition.

The US court said the evidence presented by the Philippine government "is so inconsistent and conflicting that it provides little competent evidence to support the conclusion that Strunk hired [Philip] Medel to murder Blanca."

The US court, however, said the government could present a new case against Strunk "should new, competent evidence be submitted."

In a memo to Gonzalez yesterday, the DOJ extradition panel said there was strong ground to revive the extradition petition because there were new witnesses who could give "direct (eyewitness account), credible, consistent testimony" on the killing.

The panel also pointed to the latest Court of Appeals decision "finding probable cause against Strunk for the murder of (Blanca) and which decision has been upheld by the Supreme Court."

But before the petition can be revived, Gonzalez said the DOJ would ask the US court for help in reconstructing its extradition petition for Strunk.

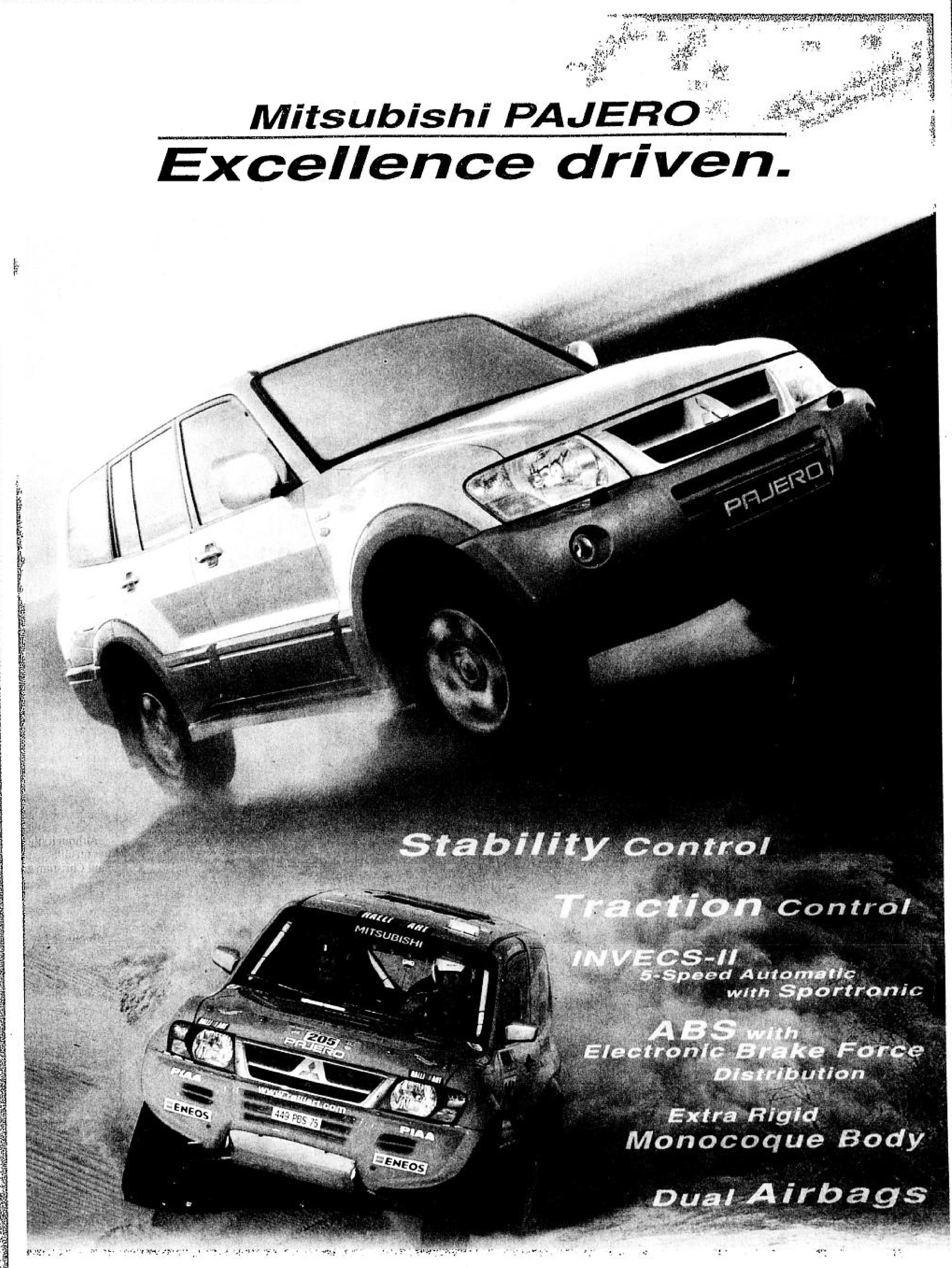
The government had sent copies of its evidence against Strunk to the US court with its first petition.

"According to the one holding it [evidence] before, it was destroyed by *anay* (termites)," Gonzalez said, brushing aside speculation the documents may have been deliberately destroyed.

Gonzalez described the loss as a "case of simple negligence."

"It's *force majeure* (inevitable)," he said. "The problem is we cannot find any duplicates, which is strange."

Blanca was killed in November 2001. Strunk fled to the US shortly after to visit his ailing mother and never returned.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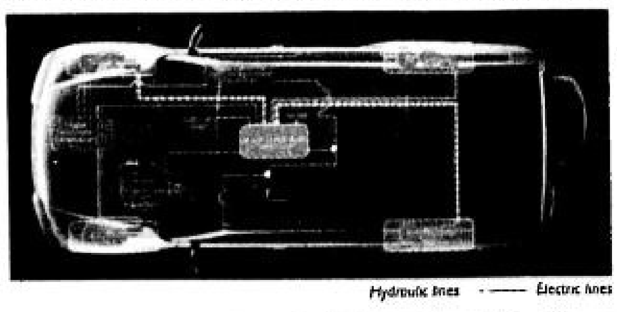

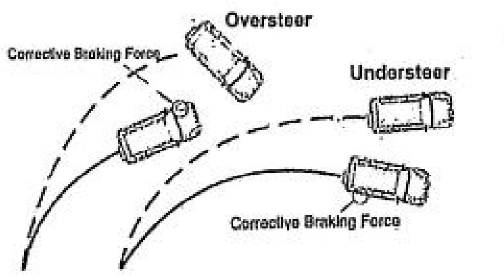

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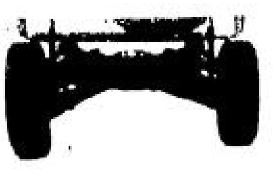

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3 WARRANTY

MITSUBISHI MOTORS

Wanted US sex offender deported

By Leila B. Salaverria

AN AMERICAN fugitive who entered the Philippines four years ago using his dead friend's passport has been arrested and was scheduled to be deported last night.

Suspect Bryan Mitchell Jones, 49, has been wanted by federal agents in the United States since 1994 for allegedly sexually molesting underage girls.

He was set to leave the country last night via a Continental Airlines flight to Guam, where he was supposed to catch a flight to the US mainland.

Jones was presented to the media yesterday by Bureau of Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr.

According to the BI, Jones arrived in the county on May 1, 2001 using the passport of his deceased friend David Eugene Marcum to avoid detection. He allegedly fled here to escape sentencing in the US.

Jones was arrested in Davao on March 22 this year after the US State Department informed the Philippines that Jones' passport has already been revoked.

Fernandez said that the revocation of Jones' passport makes him an undocumented alien, thus rendering his stay in the country illegal.

The BI commissioner also declared the suspect an undesirable alien and put his name on the immigration blacklist so that he would be barred from reentering the country.

VALENTINES DAY BOMBING

Judge bars media cameras from court

By Tarra V. Quismundo

APPARENTLY irked by the distraction, the judge hearing the case against four accused bombers of a bus in Makati City on Valentine's Day has barred certain members of the media from her court.

Calmly and politely, Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Marissa Guillen of Branch 62, in the middle of Monday's proceedings, told those present: "By the way, let me just announce that this will be the last time we are allowing live coverage of the media. We are stopping this, we have only been tolerating it."

Earlier, Guillen's attention had been drawn to a television crewman in the courtroom.

"Mr. Cameraman, could you please move aside?" Guillen addressed the television crewman who had moved to the middle of the room to get a clear shot of the four accused—Indonesian Rohmat and confessed Abu Sayyaf members Gamal Baharan, alias Tapay, Angelo Trinidad and Gappal Bannah, better known as Boy Negro—seated in the front row.

The cameraman had blocked Guillen's view of the accused, who were then about to be read the multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder charges against them.

The four had been tagged in the bloody Feb. 14 bombing of an RRCG bus on Edsa near Ayala Avenue which killed four people and wounded more than 60 others.

Rohmat would deny any involvement in the crime, while the three others readily admitted their guilt.

As the bombing was one of three almost simultaneous explosions to rock the country that day—attacks that were allegedly orchestrated by the Abu Sayyaf—the media had been closely following the case's progress.

So like any other day at work, cameramen moved around the courtroom to get the best positions, while soundmen worked to capture the clearest sound by holding microphones up to the speakers suspended on either side of the old Makati city hall building's session hall.

For security reasons, the city government had allowed Guillen's court to use the old session hall for the bombing trial.

Reporters, meanwhile, sat in the court audience, taking notes as the proceedings went on. Like everyone who attended the hearing, all members of the media had checked in at the door, entered their names on an attendance sheet, undergone a head-to-toe inspection by building guards, and told to turn off their cellular phones.

A few minutes after Guillen made her announcement, her attention was once again diverted to the media, this time courtesy of a cameraman's mobile phone reverberating throughout the room.

"Could Mr. Cameraman who is a South Border fan step out of the room first to answer his call?" said the judge, referring to the phone's ring tone which was Rainbow, a recent hit by local band South Border.

The cameraman obliged and passed his phone to a companion.

"Again, let me issue this order. There will be no more media coverage after this. I hope all news channels will respect this. I assure you, after today, the case would no longer be exciting," Guillen, whose court is actually a family court that hears cases involving minors, said.

Her order appeared to be agreeable to the members of the media, as none of them dared to appeal it. The hearing continued in front of camera lenses, and wrapped up at around 3 p.m.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, April 13, 2005
3rd Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 8:1-8
Gospel: John 6:35-40

Jesus said to the crowd, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall never be hungry, and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty. Nevertheless, as I said, you refuse to believe, even when you have seen. Yet, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I shall not turn away. For I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of the One who sent me.

"And the will of him who sent me is that I lose nothing of what he has given me, but instead that I raise it up on the last day. This is the will of the Father, that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall live with eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day."

Commentary

Stephen is martyred and Saul begins to persecute the Church, going from house to house to seek out believers and jail them but even scattered those who believe and preach the word. Philip goes to Samaria to preach. Jesus tells his hearers that even though they have the Bread of Life before them, they refuse to believe. But Jesus will not turn away from the work that the Father has sent him into the world to do. He will continue, even under duress, rejection and being condemned in public. He will lose nothing of what he has been given by God the Father. Do we come to Jesus, open and ready to do the will of our Father? Do we eat and share in this bread: the word of God in the scriptures; the Eucharist shared, the work of the coming of justice and peace, forgiveness and hope?

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Entire Abra police force sacked for being in mayors' payroll

From page A1

team cited a police report indicating that most of the policemen assigned to the province had been offering their services as bodyguards to politicians for a fee.

The source said all 27 mayors in Abra had police officers in their payroll.

"There was a need to come up with a drastic measure to [contain] violence in the province, so we asked for a complete overhaul of the police assignments there," the source said.

The panel also said that provincial politicians were involved in "illegal activities."

Reyes' order suspending the local officials' supervisory powers over the police force, called deputation, effectively placed Abra and its towns under police control.

Removing undue influence

The PNP regional police office of the Cordillera Administrative Region under regional director Chief Supt. Jesus Versoza will take over the job of maintaining peace and order in the province, said Reyes.

Reyes, who chairs the National Police Commission, the policymaking body of the national police, said he was issuing the order "to restore law and order in the province of Abra and to preempt undue influence on the outcome of an ongoing investigation.

"We are relieving the entire police force from the provincial director to the lowest uniformed policemen in the province of Abra ... effective immediately," he said.

Abra Gov. Vicente Valera had been accused by the provincial political opposition of harassment and of allegedly plotting the assassination of his political rivals.

Lagayan town Mayor Cecilia Luna had accused Valera of planning to kill her and her two sons.

Administrative and criminal cases against local executives, including the ones filed by Luna against the governor before the Ombudsman's office, also contributed to the volatile situation in the province, the fact-finding team said.

529 cops affected

Reyes, who issued the directive to replace the provincial police force to PNP chief Director General Arturo Lomibao, said the order would affect 529 policemen in Abra under provincial police director Senior Supt. Rodolfo Ebardo.

Ebardo and Cordillera police director Chief Supt. Noe Wong said they could not comment on the reported relief of the Abra police force as they had yet to receive the order from Lomibao.

Ebardo is due to retire on Thursday.

The INQUIRER tried but failed to reach Valera for comment.

Lomibao said he would first transfer those in the front line, followed by officers in the stations. This is to be completed in one or two weeks.

"We will get the replacements from nearby provinces and the regional police," he said.

First time

The PNP chief said that as far as he knew, this was the first time that an entire provincial police force was sacked. A few years ago, the entire Pasay City police force was also replaced for bungling a hostage situation.

In suspending the local executives' operational control and supervision over the police, Reyes invoked Republic Act No. 8851 which provides that Napolcom has the authority to withhold deputization powers on the grounds of abuse of power and committing acts inimical to the government.

Reyes last month created the four-member fact-finding team headed by Napolcom Commissioner Miguel Coronel, and composed of DILG-CAR Director Everdina Doctor, Napolcom-CAR Director Rodolfo Santos and Versoza.

The source said the panel had recommended to Reyes that the Abra police force be replaced with members of the PNP special operations group.

Special Action Force

In September 2004, the INQUIRER ran a series of stories concerning private armed groups reportedly maintained by warring politicians in Abra.

After the series was published, Director General Edgardo Aglipay, the then PNP chief, ordered the deployment of the Special Action Force, the PNP's elite anti-terrorism team, to Abra to dismantle the private armies.

The source said the team believed that replacing the Abra police force would weaken the hold of politicians on their territories.

Reyes said he personally talked to Valera and spoke with Rep. Luis Bersain Jr. on the phone this week.

The two politicians concurred with the decision to withdraw their deputation powers and to sack the entire police force, Reyes said.

Illegal gambling

Reyes also cited as reasons for withdrawing the local executives' deputation the unauthorized absences of local executives and reports saying that politicians were protecting illegal gambling.

The maintenance of private groups by Abra politicians has existed for a "long, long time," said Coronel, quoting religious and private organizations in the province.

Versoza, who headed Task Force Abra, said the proliferation of armed goons in Abra could be partly traced to the mayors and their security people staying in the capital Bangued instead of in their hometowns.

"Of the 27 municipalities, 15 have established extension offices in the provincial capital of Bangued ... Heightened tension and violence happen around election time but the threat to peace beyond the election period remains because of the concentration of the political figures in the capital," said a Task Force Abra report. *With a report from Artha Kira Paredes and Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

He was last seen seated on his mother's tomb

From page A1

happened during Borlongan's last hours.

A blotter report described the tragedy as "a shooting incident." It said Borlongan was found dead in his car, his left hand still holding a .45-cal. handgun.

Fr. Robert as spiritual adviser

Despite his problems, Borlongan was a jolly man, said his spiritual director, Fr. Robert Reyes.

"He kept his pains to himself," Reyes said, but added that Borlongan's failed search for justice had driven him to end his own life.

"I was part of the whole experience of Ted whenever he filed a motion for reconsideration before the Supreme Court, whenever there was a denial [of his motions]," Reyes said.

Borlongan made it to the headlines when Urban Bank was shut down by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) on April 26, 2000.

He protested all the way to the Supreme Court, claiming that the closure was "arbitrary."

According to the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp., Urban Bank collapsed because it was overexposed to real estate assets, with more than 1.3 times of its equity invested in this volatile sector.

The PDIC also said there was a mismatch because the bank was relying on short-term funds from depositors and investors.

Borlongan battled a spate of lawsuits. He also filed cases against several government agencies, hoping to clear his name, but these were dismissed.

How it happened

Police said Borlongan brought flowers to the grave site of his parents and brother a few minutes before shooting himself in the left temple.

This was how it happened, according to the police reenactment:

The late banker arrived at the memorial park at about 10:45 a.m. Before proceeding inside, he parked his pickup in front of a flower shop and bought four pots of flowers.

Borlongan did not get out of his vehicle. Vendor Rosito Adona personally put the flower pots on the passenger's seat.

"He was very quiet," Adona said.

"He did not waste time asking for a lower price. He just paid for the flowers," flower shop owner Rolly Lim said, adding that this was quite unusual.

Borlongan stayed in front of the flower shop for a few minutes before entering the memorial park.

It was when he was inside the park and sitting on his mother's tomb that the caretaker spotted him.

The flowers—yellow, pink and violet Malaysian mums—were still at the park at noon yesterday. Three pots were at the foot of the graves of the elder Borlongans; the other was atop Daniel Borlongan's tomb.

Bloodstains were still visible on the spot where Borlongan had parked his pickup.

Frustration

The farewell note Borlongan e-mailed to close friends two hours before he shot himself clearly showed his frustration over what he believed to be injustice in the Urban Bank case, banking sources said.

"O where is justice? Where is truth? Where is compassion?" part of the e-mail read.

In www.urbanbank.info, a website that Borlongan maintained to document his personal crusade, an excerpt from his letter to President Macapagal-Arroyo dated March 27, 2001, summed up his grievance against banking regulators: "BSP with PDIC illegally closed my bank, filed baseless charges to cover their tracks, used coercion upon me, my employees and directors, held hostage my depositors to protect themselves from suit, and bled my shareholders dry in order to hand over Urban to another bank."

Friends thinned out

It was a long struggle since the closure of Urban Bank, and along the way, Borlongan found that his friends had thinned out.

He felt forsaken, as his last e-mail indicated: "I kept strong, but stood alone."

His farewell e-mail echoed the closing paragraph of a letter he had sent to Chief Justice Hilario Davide dated Sept. 20, 2004: "I have fought a good fight, not merely for my sake but for the sake of others as well. In spite of the tremendous fear, burden and pain, I have competed well, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

"At my first defense, no one appeared on my behalf, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength. With the last remaining cases pending decision before the Supreme Court, my race is almost over."

Falling out

Sources said Borlongan had a falling out with Urban Bank chair Arsenio Bartolome III, his erstwhile partner in a crusade against banking regulators.

Other sources said the court battle with the banking regulators had taken a heavy toll on Borlongan's finances, further putting pressure on him.

In the letter to Davide, a copy of which was sent by Borlongan himself to the INQUIRER, he implored the chief justice to personally look into the Urban Bank-related cases. He thought the raffling of the cases was questionable.

"As you well realize, that four separate cases, although interrelated, would land on the lap of the same handling judge is highly improbable, had they been subjected to [the] customary case raffling procedures," he said.

5 cases dismissed

To date, the high court has dismissed with finality five cases filed by Borlongan, except for one claiming that the PDIC had given undue preference to the Land Bank of the Philippines in the payment of National Food Authority notes.

Borlongan lost this last case at the Court of Appeals, but had yet to elevate it to the Supreme Curt.

But he pointed out that all the five cases relating to Urban Bank's closure had been elevated before the high court within one year. Four were raffled to the same third division, and three were dismissed outright.

"Every legal means accorded to us by law were practically exhausted, only to have these cases unceremoniously concluded [on the basis of] mere technicalities and vague rulings," he said.

Prior to his death, Borlongan was still seen attending Sunday Masses with his family at the Christ the King church in Greenmeadows, where his remains now lie.

Sunday Masses

Father Reyes described his late friend as "a decent, honest and prayerful person."

Reyes recalled that when Borlongan was called to speak during a Mass on his birthday last year, the banker wept in public, asking how much longer he should wait for justice and what else he could do.

On Feb. 24, Borlongan and fellow bank officials visited Reyes on the occasion of the priest's birthday.

"He looked happy," Reyes said.

He said he told Borlongan they would see each other again on the banker's birthday, and the latter replied: "If I am still alive."

"We should have listened to him," the priest said, adding that those who heard the remark thought their friend was cracking a joke. *With PDI Research*

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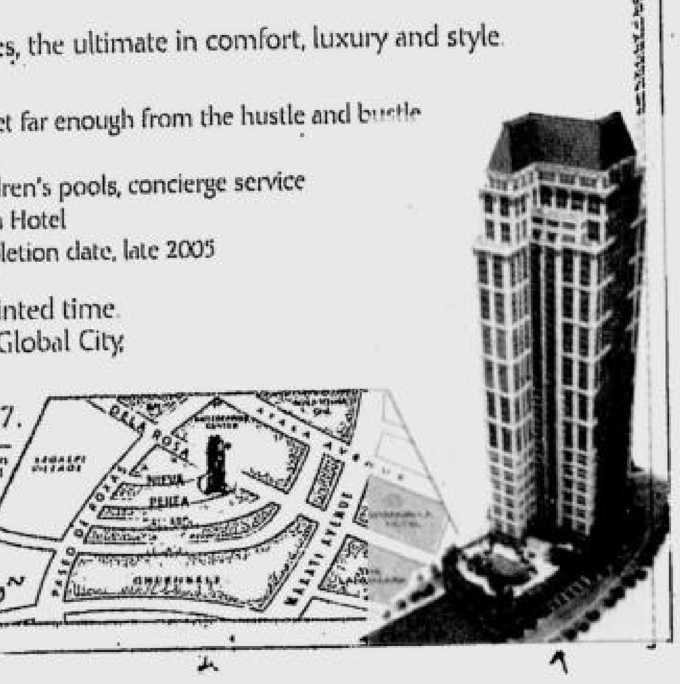

GMA ecstatic over public support for VAT, nat'l ID

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

POSITIVE results of recent opinion polls showing broad public support for her policy initiatives have made President Macapagal-Arroyo ecstatic despite the sharp drop in her approval ratings which plunged to their lowest since she assumed power in 2001.

"The survey showing strong support for the VAT (value added tax) as well as the national identification system reflect the growing maturity of the average Filipino in discerning the imperatives of economic stability and national security," said the President in a briefing prior to the National Economic and Development Authority board meeting yesterday.

A survey by Pulse Asia Inc. showed that nearly seven out of 10 Filipinos would support the VAT rate hike from 10 percent to 12 percent and the lifting of VAT exemptions if the government would crack down on corruption and wasteful spending by its officials.

A separate survey by the Social Weather Stations also showed that three out of five Filipinos agree that the national ID system would be effective in fighting terrorism and that the government was trustworthy enough to implement this.

These survey results are seen as a rare vote of confidence in the Arroyo administration which has seen the President's popularity declining to its lowest in her four years in office based on surveys made by the same private pollsters.

"It encourages us therefore to move very fast at least on the administrative side," said the President who got another assurance from Senate President Franklin Drilon that the Senate would wrap up discussions on the VAT "shortly."

The President also noted that foreign investors have also started to recognize the economic reforms being undertaken by her administration even though it has been slower than she expected.

She said that in her meeting with Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corp. investment bank chief Stuart Gulliver in Malacañang, "he congratulated me on the policy moves made since January and he's very happy with my new economic team."

Gulliver told the President that the spread or premium sought by investors on Philippine debt papers has been narrowing compared to debt papers of other emerging markets which indicate growing confidence in the country.

NBI sends documents vs Lacson aide to US

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has submitted the documents linking former police superintendent Michael Ray Aquino to the Dacer-Corbito double slay to the US Department of Homeland Security.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said the documents would become part of the removal proceedings against Aquino, who was arrested in March for alleged violation of US immigration laws.

"The documents, which include a handwritten confession of Supt. Glenn Dumlao, could be used to negate whatever request Aquino has for political asylum," Wycoco said, adding that the removal proceedings will begin tomorrow.

Wycoco said that Aquino has to prove that he was being politically persecuted by the Philippine government in order to be granted political asylum in the US.

Supt. Glenn Dumlao had tagged Aquino and Cesar Mancao, also a former police superintendent, in the November 2000 murders of publicist Salvador "Bubby" Dacer and his driver Emmanuel Corbito.

Aquino and Mancao were charged with the abduction and murder of the publicist and his driver along with several members of the defunct Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force, which Senator Panfilo Lacson once headed.

The two men were able to leave the country in July 2001 despite hold-departure orders issued in May of that year, reportedly flying to Hong Kong on fake passports, then to the United States on genuine travel papers.

NBI officials said in earlier interviews that the bureau had no warrant to arrest Aquino because the court had rejected Dumlao's statement linking him and Mancao to the double murder.

Divino; 66

HELEN Dolorico Divino, former head of the department of obstetrics and gynecology and former medical director of the Dr. Fe del Mundo Medical Center, died on Monday. She was 66.

She is survived by her siblings and their spouses Jacobo Jr. and Magdalena, Manuel Sr. and Eumena, Virginia and Gregorio; nephews and nieces and their spouses Gregory and Rosalie, Jacob and Virna, Geraldine, Geoffrey and Carla, Lily Ann, and Manuel Jr; and grandnephews and grandnieces Popoi, Quilo, T, Gio, Andie, Sabine and Stella.

Her remains lie at the Mt. Carmel Chapel of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on Broadway in Quezon City. Thanksgiving Mass will be held at 9 a.m. after which her remains will be brought to the Loyola Memorial Park Crematory in Quezon City for cremation and interment.

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Bank accuses former exec of lying under oath

THE FORMER bank executive who accused the Standard Chartered Bank of illegally dismissing him after he blew the whistle on the bank's alleged sale of unregistered securities is facing perjury charges for lying under oath, the bank's legal counsel said yesterday.

In a press statement, SCB legal counsel Reynaldo Geronimo accused Manuel Baviera, who recently won favorable a ruling—appealed by SCB—in the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) for his reinstatement, of falsely claiming under oath that two of his former Filipino colleagues in the bank were Indian nationals and should be put on the hold-departure list.

The case against Manuel Baviera will be tried by the Makati Metropolitan Trial Court today, Geronimo said. The bank's lawyer had said Baviera asked for $2 million from SCB after his $8,000 investment lost half its value, but the bank refused to obliged, calling the demand an extortion attempt.

Geronimo said Chona Reyes and Ellen Victor, SCB's financial controller and trust officer, respectively, are both natural-born Filipinos. Baviera used to be a senior official at the bank's personnel department.

Under present regulations, aliens can administratively be prevented from leaving the country even without a court order if their presence is needed in any case in the Philippines. This is done through a hold departure order issued by the secretary of justice. A court order is needed for a hold departure order against Filipino citizens.

Baviera claimed in a sworn affidavit that Reyes and Victor were Indian nationals and "could at any time be assigned to the different branches of the bank outside the Philippines" so that, despite being Filipinos, they can be subjected to a hold departure order.

'Then Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong did not grant the hold order petition but placed the two Filipinas on the watch list, which merely required them "to go through the major inconvenience of seeking clearances for their foreign travels," Geronimo said.

Baviera, through his lawyer, former Solicitor General Frank Chavez, gave SCB an ultimatum in June 2003, saying he would file all kinds of charges in various forums, including the Senate, if he was not paid $2 million within seven days.

Baviera made good his threat and filed various cases against the bank in quick succession with the Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Anti-Money Laundering Council, the National Labor Relations Commission, the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

All these cases were filed before he executed his affidavit on Reyes and Victor in September 2003, Geronimo said.

The Senate held a hearing on the bank's activities last month based on information from the complaints Baviera had filed before the other government agencies.

The SCB, a London-based international bank, filed a case for extortion against Baviera, which was heard again by the Makati court last April 11.

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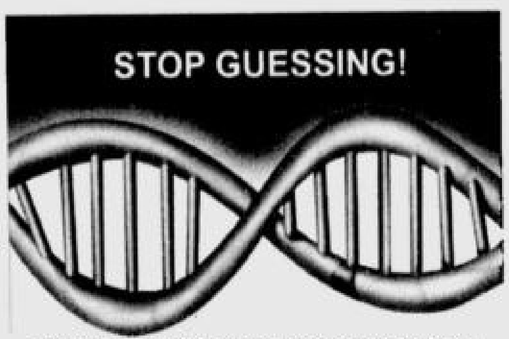
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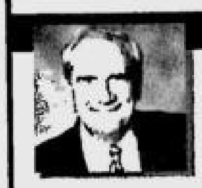
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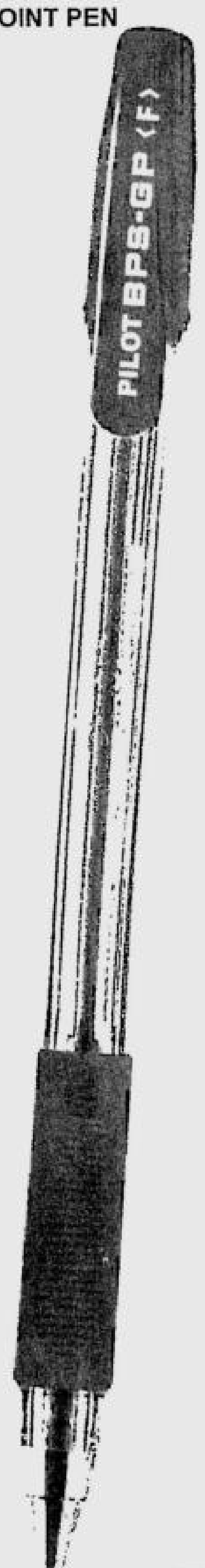

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Bangladesh factory blast kills 30

SAVAR, Bangladesh—Rescuers used their bare hands, crow bars and hammers Tuesday to reach 200 people still trapped inside the concrete debris of a nine-story garment factory that collapsed after a boiler explosion, as the death toll climbed to 30, police said.

Though nine bodies were pulled from the rubble overnight, rescuers were hopeful that more lives could be saved, with some survivors heard calling for help and begging for water.

Nurul Islam, a police official supervising the rescue work, said about 200 people were feared trapped beneath the mangled sweater factory that collapsed Monday near Savar, an industrial town 32 km northwest of the capital Dhaka.

Anxious relatives joined soldiers and firefighters in the desperate search for trapped workers, using crow bars, hammers, and even their bare hands. Some rescue workers had welding machines to reach people and to clear the rubble so survivors could have air.

One survivor, Helaluddin, said he was on the seventh floor along with about 90 workers when the building collapsed.

"I was overseeing the workers when there was a big bang and (the) building suddenly started shaking and going down," said Helaluddin, who uses one name. *AP*

China-Japan row escalates

TOKYO—A row between Japan and China intensified Tuesday as the Asian powers each demanded protection for their nationals and Beijing insisted Tokyo did not deserve a cherished permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Three days after thousands of Chinese took to the streets to vent fury at Japan and its past aggression, the Japanese trade minister described China as a "scary country" and Tokyo repeated demands for a Chinese apology.

But there were also calls for calm, with Beijing's envoy to Tokyo telling Japan it had nothing to fear from his nation's economic and military rise.

The Chinese government, which largely tolerated the rare demonstration in Beijing, on Tuesday backed protesters' view that Japan should not win a Security Council seat until it faced up to its bloody past.

"Only a country that respects the history, takes responsibility for the past history and wins over the trust of the people of Asia and the world at large can take greater responsibilities in the international community," Premier Wen Jiabao said on a visit to fellow Security Council aspirant India.

"I think the whole issue in China-Japan relations is that Japan needs to face up to history squarely," said Wen, whose nation is the only Asian power with a veto-wielding UN seat.

Japan has made winning a prestigious UN seat a key foreign policy goal to show it is a global power 60 years after its defeat in war.

Anti-Japan sentiment has been running high in China since Tuesday, when Japan approved a textbook critics say glosses over the brutalities of Japan's occupation of China from 1931 to 1945.

Thousands of Chinese joined violent protests at what many in Asia see as Japan's failure to own up to atrocities during and before World War Two. Protesters in China and elsewhere in Asia have also spoken out against Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Over the weekend, protesters burned the Japanese flag, bashed Japanese-made cars, targeted Japanese businesses and broke windows at the Japanese Embassy in Beijing. Japanese TV showed police standing by while protestors threw stones at the embassy.

Japan has also been showing growing confidence, on Sunday summoning the Chinese ambassador to demand an apology and compensation.

Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura, who is due in Beijing on Sunday, said Japan wanted a reply "at the earliest."

Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Shoichi Nakagawa said he was worried about the impact on Japanese companies in China, which last year surpassed the United States as Japan's top commercial partner despite the political friction.

"As I have heard they are aiming to build a country driven by the market economy, I want (China) to take firm measures. It's a scary country," Nakagawa told a news conference.

But with images of angry Chinese being shown repeatedly on Japanese television, China turned the tables and demanded protection for Chinese residents after an act of vandalism.

Police said nine cracks, which could have been caused by a BB or air gun, were discovered Sunday in the glass door of a building that includes a branch office of the Bank of China in Yokohama near Tokyo.

"Chinese officials working there felt danger. This is a kind of terrorist act," embassy spokesperson Huang Xingyuan said in a statement.

Ambassador Wang Yi, addressing a Tokyo conference two days after being summoned to hear Japan's protest, said the two nations had an "urgent task" of building a stable relationship. *AFP, Reuters*

Cardinals to lodge in style as they elect a pope

VATICAN CITY—The Vatican released a videotape Monday illuminating the closed world the cardinals will live in when they meet to elect the next pope: A hotel of white marble and potted plants with a convention-center look.

It may appear cold and impersonal from the video, but it's a large step up from the cramped quarters in the Apostolic Palace where past conclaves were held.

Rather than the makeshift cubbyholes in the palace they occupied twice in 1978, the cardinals will stay in a recently restored residence with 106 suites and 22 single rooms, each with a private bathroom. Previously, the august "princes of the church" shared one bathroom for as many as six prelates.

All 115 cardinals eligible to vote will move into Domus Sanctae Marthae, or Martha's House before the conclave begins April 18.

The Vatican showed a videotape of the residence to journalists on Monday. A second video previewed the three oval shaped metal urns into which the cardinals will place their folded ballots.

The video panned over a reception area with white marble floors, a sitting area with brown upholstered sofas and a few potted plants, stark hallways with lighting from sconces on the walls, and a modern chapel.

The sparsely decorated dining room was fitted mostly with large round tables and fruit bowls as centerpieces, reminiscent of a convent refectory. A large crucifix was on the wall above a side table where a nun was arranging flowers.

According to a prelate who ate there recently described the food as simple but good—a pasta dish and a main course washed down by Frascati wine, straight from the vineyards in the Roman countryside.

The one bedroom on the video—apparently one of the larger suites—had a wooden floor and was furnished with antiques.

The rooms are intended to be simple but efficient. They include a bed, built-in closet, night table, desk and chair. Suites have a sitting area with a small couch and two armchairs. *AP*

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Jackson begged to sleep with my son, says mother

SANTA MARIA, Calif—A sobbing Michael Jackson in 1993 begged a mother for permission to sleep with her 13-year-old boy, the beginning of a relationship that ended in a $23 million settlement and left her estranged from her son ever since, the woman testified on Monday.

In sometimes emotional testimony, the mother said she deeply regretted trusting the pop icon and hadn't spoken to her now-25-year-old son since shortly after the family reached the out-of-court settlement with Jackson over child molestation accusations in the mid-1990s.

The woman recounted how Jackson, who met the family at her ex-husband's Rent-a-Wreck car rental agency in Los Angeles, took an immediate shine to her son, engaging him in long telephone conversations and inviting them to his Neverland Valley Ranch.

She said her son asked several times to spend the night with Jackson and she refused until the singer came to her during a trip to Las Vegas—sobbing, shaking and begging her for a sleepover with the boy.

"Michael was trembling, saying 'We're a family. (He) is having fun. Why can't he sleep in my bed? There's nothing wrong. There's nothing going on. Don't you trust me?" she testified.

The mother said she relented and the next day, the singer presented her with a Cartier gold bracelet. That began a pattern in which Jackson spent many nights with her son, including about 30 in the boy's bedroom at the family's home in the Los Angeles area.

The woman said she gradually lost control of her son as he began dressing like the self-styled King of Pop, becoming sullen and ignoring other family members. During a trip to New York City in the summer of 1993, she tried to intervene and Jackson again became distraught.

"Why can't we be a family? Why are you objecting to (the boy) staying with me? Why don't you trust me?" the woman recalled Jackson saying. "He was upset that I wanted my son back. I didn't like the situation. It was getting out of hand."

Though the mother never saw Jackson molest her son, she was called by prosecutors as they try to prove that the entertainer has a predilection for sexually abusing young boys. The son, one of five boys who prosecutors say were molested or targeted for abuse by Jackson, stopped cooperating with authorities after settling his case and is not expected to testify.

Jackson, 46, was never charged in the 1993 case, but the judge in the current trial ruled last month that evidence about that case could be presented. The ruling was a major setback to the pop singer's defense. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

30 in Cairo blast nabbed

CAIRO—Egyptian police have detained 30 people in last week's deadly bombing in a Cairo tourist bazaar, including the suspected bomber's mother, three brothers and 16 other relatives, prosecutors said. Police arrested the family members after identifying the body of the bomber, who died in the blast that killed two French tourists and an American and wounded 18 others Thursday in Cairo's Khan al-Khalili bazaar. Among those arrested was an uncle who called authorities after seeing the suspected bomber's body in a newspaper photograph. The suspect, Hassan Rafaat Ahmed Bashandi, was a student who became a religious extremist after his father's death, the interior ministry said. Bashandi, who was 17 or 18 years old, apparently acted alone in the attack, the ministry said in a statement. He was carrying almost 7 pounds of TNT in a leather bag filled with nails when it exploded prematurely, the ministry said. *AP*

US contractor kidnapped

BAGHDAD—An American contractor was kidnapped near Baghdad on Monday, the US Embassy said, raising fresh concerns about security in Iraq where more than 150 foreigners have been abducted by guerrillas over the past year. "No group has claimed responsibility. We have contacted the Iraqi authorities to try and find him," said embassy spokesperson Bob Callaghan, adding the contractor was working on a reconstruction project. No other details were available. The kidnapping of the US contractor occurred one day after an official at the Pakistani Embassy was reported abducted. Pakistan said on Monday Malik Mohammad Javed was probably being held for a ransom. "Mr. Javed is absolutely safe," Pakistani foreign ministry spokesperson Jalil Abbas Jilani told a news conference. "He is regularly in contact with our charges d'affaires. His last contact... took place last night." *AP*

Democrats block Bolton

WASHINGTON—Democrats sought to block President George W. Bush's pick for UN ambassador at a confirmation hearing on Monday that focused on allegations the nominee tried to have intelligence analysts removed from their posts after disagreeing with him. Bush's choice of John Bolton, a blunt detractor of the world body, has been a lightning rod for criticism of the president from Democrats who complain he has forged a "go-it-alone" approach to US foreign policy. Bolton is now the top US diplomat for nonproliferation. Democratic senators zeroed in on Bolton's efforts in that capacity to reassign analysts in 2002 after they differed with him on Cuba's alleged weapons programs and apparently undercut his position. One analyst was a chemical and biological weapons intelligence expert at the state department; the other worked on the National Intelligence Council. *AP*

Blair still favored to win in British polls

LONDON—As Britain's national election campaign hit high gear, Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labor Party was running almost neck-and-neck with the opposition Conservatives.

So why are so few people betting the Tories have much of a chance of winning?

Quirks in Britain's electoral system mean that the Conservatives could capture more votes than Labor or any other party and still lose the election.

Polls this week showed the race anywhere between a dead heat and a seven-point advantage for Labor.

But "nobody is imagining that the Conservatives can win, and it is entirely down to the bias in the electoral system," said John Curtice, a political analyst at Stratchlyde University.

A campaign ad was broadcast Monday showing Blair and his Treasury head Gordon Brown setting out their vision for a third term in office. The short film, crafted with the help of Oscar-winning director Anthony Minghella, shows the pair sitting closely together in a dimly-lit House of Commons office, brainstorming ideas and chatting like old college friends.

Britain's parliament does not have proportional representation—a system in which seats are distributed based on the overall vote breakdown nationwide.

Instead, each of Britain's 646 electoral districts sends one lawmaker to the House of Commons. Whoever wins the most votes in each district gets the seat, and the party that gains the most Commons seats forms the government.

BLAIR

It sounds simple, but it makes for a complicated political equation—one that experts agree is currently skewed against the Tories.

Analysts predict that even if both parties win an equal share of the vote, Labor would still have a Commons majority of 50 seats.

To win outright, Conservative leader Michael Howard would need a massive 10 or 11 point lead, analysts say.

A poll released Monday, done by the NOP firm for The Independent newspaper, showed Labor ahead by six percentage points, with 38 percent support compared to 32 percent for the Tories. Pollsters interviewed 956 people with a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

A look at Britain's political map shows several factors working for Labor.

A large portion of Conservative supporters are in rural districts where Labor voters are scarce. In these areas the Tories win by a heavy margin, thus "wasting" votes.

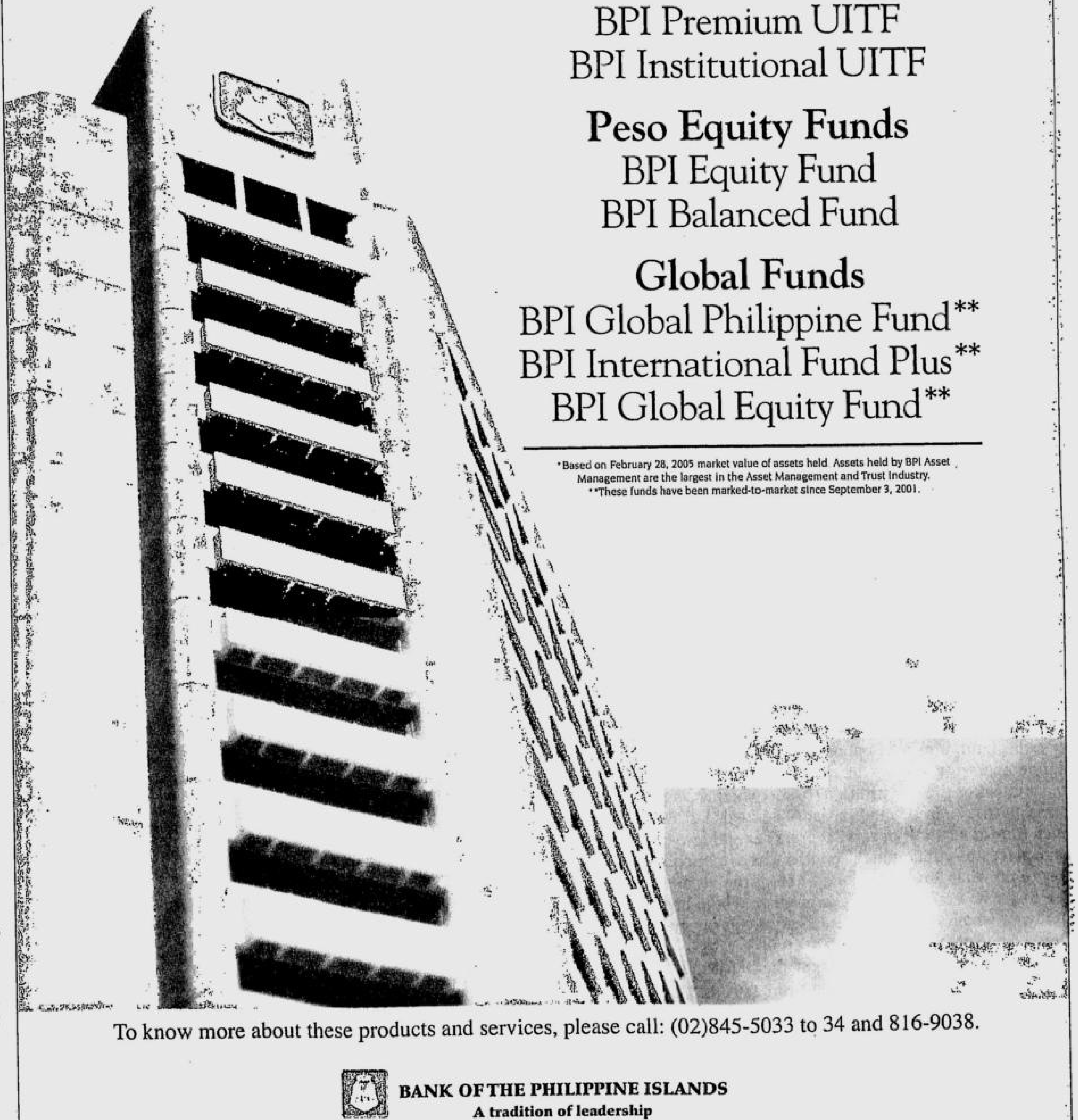
Labor's support is strong in urban areas which are carved into many smaller electoral districts, where fewer votes can mean a seat. Labor's support is also efficiently distributed across far more constituencies—albeit ones where they have won in recent years by a small margin.

It all boils down to what the British call "safe seats." Labor has a lot, the Tories relatively few.

"The key thing is the distribution of the support," said William Jones, a political analyst at Manchester University. "It takes so many fewer votes to elect a Labor MP as their support is piled up in safe constituencies."

Jones said he did not expect to see a massive shift in support for Howard before the May 5 election.

"Howard needs an earthquake shift and there is nothing in the state of political affairs to indicate anything other than a minor tremor on the Richter scale," he said. *AP*



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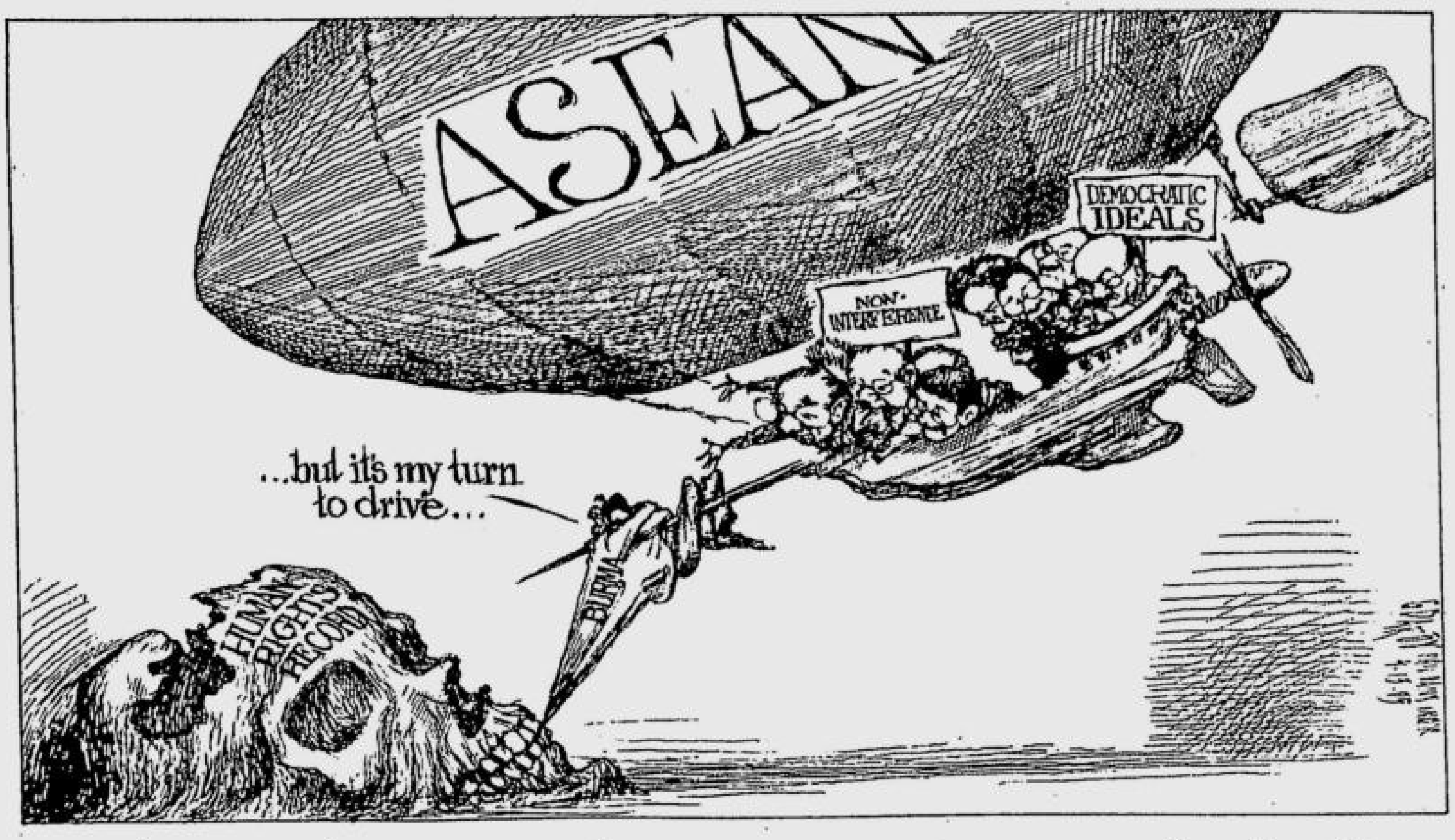


Losing gracefully

EDITORIAL

IN 1949, outraged supporters of Jose P. Laurel were preparing to launch a rebellion in Batangas until their candidate took it upon himself to accept defeat rather than unleash a civil war.

In 1953, fearing the prospect of a rigged election, Ramon Magsaysay at one point considered taking military action if he were cheated of the election.

In 1961, refusing to believe he had lost, President Carlos P. Garcia seriously promoted the idea of proclaiming vice-presidential candidate Sergio Osmeña Jr. as acting president, giving the latter at least a year in office until Garcia's protest could be resolved. The deal offered Osmeña the prospect of becoming president after Garcia's eight years—allowed under the 1935 Constitution—were concluded in 1964. Osmeña refused.

In 1965, convinced that Gerardo Roxas had been cheated out of the vice-presidency, Diosdado Macapagal considered calling out the army; to do what exactly, this was never determined as his advisers rapidly convinced him that his ticket had lost, and that the army was heavily pro-Marcos.

These political tales from our past serve as reminders of a dreadful truth in Philippine elections: once lost, an election is nearly impossible to overturn.

Indeed, on a national level, overturning election results, by resorting to the mechanisms in place, is virtually impossible. If it really wants to, the frustrated public can pursue only two alternatives: the first is to follow the example of the elections of 1953—ensure that the elections are free and fair; the other is to follow the example of the national election of 1986—hold a peaceful revolution when the elections turn out dirty.

The decision of Ms Susan Roces—to accept the decision of the Supreme Court and to drop her pursuit of her late husband's electoral protest—is a decision in the mold of those made by Laurel and Osmeña Jr.—not to unleash a potential civil war. In truth, Roces' wishes to represent her husband aside, the setback experienced by the opposition at the hands of the Supreme Court can be attributed to one of the reasons the opposition lost, in the first place: a lack of experienced leadership and an appreciation of the complexities of the law.

Some say that if Sen. Loren Legarda had led the protest of the opposition before the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, there would have been no opening whatsoever for the Supreme Court to reach that decision.

Sadly, there is no judicial precedent, in our country, of a presidential election protest filed and recognized in the name of a candidate who has died. Even Legarda's quest will most likely be restricted to her questioning the election of Vice President Noli de Castro; but her protest cannot look into the validity of the election of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In this light, it may be opportune for Congress to examine again the essence of electoral protests, within the context of the Constitution, to see whether "interested parties" can be more broadly defined. But until such time as a review of current practices and laws can take place, the public and the politicians have no choice but to do what Roces has done—accept the verdict of the Supreme Court. The only alternative would be anarchy, of which Fernando Poe Jr. had a vigorously-expressed horror.

The decision of Roces to accept the verdict of the Supreme Court, neither enthusiastically nor too grudgingly, is a cause for celebration. It is yet another demonstration of how seriously she tries to uphold fidelity to what she believes to be her husband's example. Maintaining due adherence to the law—whatever the glaring faults of the legal system—was a hallmark of Poe; it is as much his widow's. Just as time and again he resisted the advice and temptation to unleash dangerous political passions, so has his widow refused to unleash violent political tempers upon this land. As to Legarda's claim that it was in Cebu, Pampanga and Maguindanao where "massive electoral frauds" took place, and that in Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur and Surigao del Sur "manifest electoral errors" were committed, this is where her protest, which continues, will look into.

In law, substance always superior to technicality

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

WILL we, the people, never know who really won in the last presidential elections? Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is serving as President, but was she the real choice of the majority of Filipinos in the last presidential election? We would have known had the poll protest of Fernando Poe Jr. been pursued to its conclusion. But he died before the recount could even begin. His widow, Susan Roces, filed a petition to replace him as the protester, but the Presidential Electoral Tribunal dismissed her petition on a technicality. The other day, Susan abandoned the protest, saying she didn't think the unanimous decision would be reversed.

Technicality. When judges or courts have difficulty resolving the issues of a case, they usually resort to technicalities to decide it. But there is a very strong principle in law that jurists, law books, and the Supreme Court itself keep on repeating: substance always takes precedence over technicality.

In the FPJ protest case, the technicality is that Susan cannot replace him in the case because she won't benefit if GMA loses in the recount. Susan cannot take over the presidency because she was never a candidate. Only the other presidential candidates can. But they can no longer substitute as protester because the 30-day period for doing that has lapsed. So it looks like we will never know the truth; so in the next five years, we will be faced by a likelihood that a bogus President is ruling us.

Who really won in the presidential election? This is the substantial question in the FPJ protest case that the PET decision—which ran counter to the legal principle that substance takes precedence over technicality—allowed to be overwhelmed by a technicality.

Of course, Susan would not have benefited from the protest case even if successful. The beneficiary would have been the people who are more important than any individual. They would have known for sure the real president or, at least, who should have been.

Suppose the recount had shown that GMA lost? The winner, FPJ, couldn't assume the presidency because he's dead. Who takes over from the pretender? Of course, the elected vice president, in this case, Noli de Castro.

But suppose Loren Legarda wins her own protest case against the Vice President, which she confidently predicted in last Monday's Kapihan sa Manila? As the duly elected vice president, can she take over the presidency from the presidential pretender?

Justice dictates that she should. But the 30-day period has already lapsed. Does that mean she is barred from taking over what is rightfully hers? That is technicality over substance again, a mere technicality thwarting justice.

I think such a decision would be a miscarriage of justice. It would cheat not only the duly elected vice president but, more importantly, the people, who would be deprived of their rightful president and ruled by a bogus. The Supreme Court members should not allow themselves to serve as tools in the commission of such an injustice.

But how can the present members of the tribunal depose GMA from Malacañang when it was they themselves who put her there in the first place by legitimizing her takeover from the duly-elected President Joseph Estrada, contrary to law?

In their desire to make legal what is illegal, the justices twisted the interpretation of the law they are sworn to uphold. Now it has caught them in a web of contradictions from which it would be difficult to escape.

* * *

Last Monday, Legarda filed with the PET a list of the provinces whose results in the vice-presidential election she is protesting. She named the three pilot provinces—Cebu, Pampanga and Maguindanao. The PET had ruled that if the recount in these three provinces showed that there was indeed cheating, the results in the other protested provinces would also be counted.

But at Monday's Kapihan, Legarda said that may not be necessary as she may be able to surmount De Castro's lead of 800,000 votes in these three provinces alone. That is why, she said, she is confident that her poll protest will be finished as early as this December.

That may be overly optimistic. As past election cases have shown, the protested candidate in a poll protest will employ every trick to delay the case so that by the time it is resolved, the term of office would be over or almost over. Past cases have also shown that electoral tribunals are very slow and are easy victims, or willing accomplices, of dilatory tactics. How many winners in poll protests assumed the positions that rightfully belonged to them with only a few days left of the term of office?

* * *

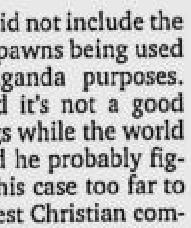
Instead of being afraid of the current transport strike, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) can put it to good use. The current traffic anarchy in Metro Manila is caused by too many vehicles in the streets, the most unruly being the drivers of buses, jeepneys and tricycles. As the bumper-to-bumper lines of half-empty buses on Edsa and the long lines of jeepneys and tricycles waiting for passengers in the terminals show, there is already an oversupply of them and their number should be reduced.

But LTFRB chief Elena Bautista is afraid to cancel franchises. Joining the transport strike would be a good reason to cancel them as that would be a violation of their franchise to serve the public.

Drivers of buses and jeepneys keep on asking for fare increases, not only because prices of fuel continue rising; it's more because of the scarcity of passengers due to too many competitors. As in any case where there is an oversupply, reduction will benefit everybody—the drivers, the transportation companies and the public.

Too many movies

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

I READ with vast amusement Marc Rivero's letter to the editor last week (PDI, 4/6/05), accusing me of being a propaganda pawn of the Muslims. The parts that particularly had me in fits of hilarity were this: "He doesn't know the psyche of the Muslims. They respect will, strength and decisiveness. The Muslims might hate US President George W. Bush and Israel but I'm sure they have more respect for them than for the likes of Jacques Chirac, Kofi Annan, Nelson Mandela, Bill Clinton or Conrado de Quiros."

"De Quiros sees himself as a defender of the Muslim minority. But the Muslims see him only as a naïve pawn to be used for propaganda purposes. The same way the Muslims use the French and Chirac, who are as naïve as De Quiros is."

Rivero goes on to ask why I haven't said anything about the Tiananmen massacre and other atrocities wreaked by communists.

I was tempted after reading this to say, I rest my case. No one could have vindicated me more, by exhibiting the quality of mind of the opposition. Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and George W himself could not have put a better case for how they see the world. But I thought I'd take the letter a little more seriously because it is by no means the first to express these thoughts. Others have done so as well, though with far less breathtaking simplemindedness. Rivero's letter is a caricature, but it is typical nonetheless of a good deal of the thinking, such as it might be called that, about Muslims and terrorism in this country.

What can I say? I am flattered that I have been lumped in the company of Chirac, Annan, Mandela, and Clinton, though the last I envy only for the frenetic activities he applied himself to in his Oval Office. But Mandela, ah, he is another matter entirely. Easy to see whom I'd rather be lumped with. All Mandela did was end apartheid after spending much of his life in prison; all George W did was end civilization as we know it, after spending much of his life doing business with Osama bin Laden's family. Rivero would do well to take out a huge life insurance before asking the Muslims how much they respect Bush.

I'm surprised that Rivero did not include the Pope among his list of naïve pawns being used by the Muslims for propaganda purposes. Though he probably figured it's not a good time to be saying those things while the world talks of canonizing him. And he probably figured it would be stretching his case too far to say that the head of the largest Christian community on earth is the unwitting tool of Muslims. But his proposition clearly presupposes it. More than Chirac, Annan, Schroeder, et al., it was the Pope who bitterly opposed the invasion of Iraq and the US concept of "anti-terrorism." He even sent a bishop close to the Bush family to tell the US president off in that respect.

Just one last detail before I go on to something more important. That is the part about the Tiananmen massacre. I did speak out against it soon after it happened in several columns, and took issue with Crispin Beltran for his approval of it. Indeed, more than that, I have repeatedly spoken out against the "killing fields" the CPP-NPA wreaked in the 1980s, which led to the deaths of hundreds, and I said the perpetrators should be brought to justice. Atrocity is atrocity, whether it is committed by Right or Left, government or rebel, terrorists or "anti-terrorists."

Less hysterically, Mae Paloma (Letters, PDI, 3/30/05) protests my depiction of the Camp Diwa siege as a massacre, probably carried out to hide the truth, and suggests I've been watching too many movies. She says elsewhere in the world prison riots and jailbreaks take place as well, and they are put down with equal ferocity. Well, elsewhere in the world, the most wanted criminals do not get to escape routinely or attempt jailbreaks. This wasn't the first time an Abu Sayyaf leader escaped or tried to. Even more, elsewhere in the world, the kind of response Angelo Reyes took, which felled the innocent along with the guilty, would have brought down afterward an investigation of the prison system and the legitimacy of the response, particularly whether it was precipitate or not. This hasn't happened, not least because the dead can't talk.

The national attitude toward terrorism comes straight from an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. In his movies, it is always clear who the good guys and bad guys are. The bad guys are introduced applying themselves to nasty acts, and action movies have been very inventive in conceptualizing nasty acts. More to the point, with the exception of the chief villain, who is given cursory characterization, the bad guys are just cardboard figures who are there to be rid of by the hero also in very inventive ways. By contrast, the good guys have families, and the death of the least of their loved ones takes on the aspect of tragedy.

The Bicutan siege left 23 people dead. The only one whose personal circumstances have been examined is the cop who died in the attack. The three Abu Sayyaf leaders were promptly demonized and the rest forgotten as "collateral damage." That is exactly how the massacre of Muslim villages by government troops in the South gets to be depicted too. The couple of dead soldiers in those attacks are written about in all their heroism and their widows and children captured in photographs in the throes of grief. The dead "bandit leaders" get to be demonized and the scores of women and children who litter the ground along with them are forgotten. Or, worse, thought of as deserving of their fate for consorting with the enemy. In the silver screen, the dead get to rise again and die again in the next movie. In life, they don't. They stay dead.

Who really has been watching too many movies?

Media's role in the Mindanao conflict

COMMENTARY

Zachary Abuza

The Manila-centric national media have helped make the conflict worse by their choice of coverage, or lack thereof

REPORTS of continued ties of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front with the Jemaah Islamiyah and, increasingly, with a faction of the Abu Sayyaf, have received considerable political and media attention. What has not received much attention is the no-less-important point that this "tripartite link-up" is a rational choice for the MILF leadership; indeed a needed bit of self-defense. The MILF, from experience, sees that the Philippine government has little intention in negotiating seriously with them. The government's lack of commitment to genuine peace is immediately evident. The Armed Forces of the Philippines has repeatedly launched surprise attacks.

And why would the MILF feel confident about the peace talks when the government has failed to implement its 1996 agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front and has, in fact, revived the war in Jolo?

One must recall that formal talks between the government and MILF broke down in March 2003 when the AFP assaulted the Buliok complex. Since then, the government has shuffled the members of their peace panel, starved the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process of funds, and has not pressed either the MILF or the Malaysian facilitators for an immediate return to the negotiating table.

The government also has shown little vision for the peace process. Peace processes need constant high-level intervention and political leadership. By definition, civil wars are complex, and their various vested stakeholders are many. Without strong direction from the top, a durable settlement is unlikely to be reached. For example, in the negotiations that led to the 1996 agreement with the MNLF, President Fidel V. Ramos directly fielded calls from the negotiators—with his Cabinet, even from the golf course. A similar personal commitment by President Macapagal-Arroyo is needed if she is to succeed in reaching a deal with the MILF.

To reach such a lasting agreement and political solution—one that addresses the very legitimate grievances of the Bangsamoro people, represented at least in part by the MILF—it is critical that the government seriously engage in a peace process.

But the government is not alone in its responsibility to seek peace. The media have a vital role to play. Regrettably, the Manila-centric national media have helped make the conflict worse by their choice of coverage, or lack thereof, reflecting the all too widespread inherent prejudice among the majority Christian Filipinos toward Muslims.

A daily reading of the Philippine press gives one the impression that the Muslims of Mindanao are rebels, kidnappers or terrorists, nothing more. Unfortunately, this perspective is formed and perpetuated in school history textbooks, which have few, if any, Moro heroes or positive accounts of the accomplishments and influence of the Muslim sultanates.

This biased reporting has tremendous implications for the peace process. The lack of leadership from both the executive and legislative departments reflects the fact, in part, that there is little public outcry from Luzon and the Visayas about the failure to negotiate peace—despite the fact that every dollar spent on mortar shells or Simba tanks eats up funds for their own schools, water and social services. Indeed, there is an active opposition to reaching compromises with the Moro population. There is no political pressure on the leaders to make the hard choices and concessions that need to be made in the peace process so that there can be a durable and equitable solution in Mindanao.

The MILF, too, must be held responsible for doing the right thing—ending the ties between some of its leaders and the Abu Sayyaf and JI, and turning over those individuals who discredit both the Islam religion and an otherwise legitimate political movement. Regrettably, it is unlikely that the MILF will cut these ties until the peace process resumes in earnest, and until the MILF gains some confidence that government commitments and agreements will be honored, and that the AFP will not undercut or obstruct their implementation.

The press has to get serious about the peace process, too. Instead of focusing solely on the issue of terrorism, it should also question the government's policies, tactics and objectives while broadening coverage of the underlying issues and perspectives of the Bangsamoro people. Only then will the media begin to educate the Filipino people and join those in government and civil society who see the importance of promoting peace and creating a positive environment that will foster economic development (by attracting foreign investment) and prosperity for all Filipinos.

Zachary Abuza is a senior fellow at the US Institute of Peace. The views expressed here are his own and not the institute's.

Cell phone pornographers

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SOON after Edsa II, which was fueled in part by messages texted from one phone to another, exhorting people to gather at the Edsa Shrine, a friend enthused that with texting, "anybody with a cell phone can become a broadcaster."

These days, with camera phones and video recording, anybody with a cell phone can also become a pornographer.

Hot news these days is the tit-for-tat scandals purportedly involving stars of two major TV networks, in sex video footage. Of added interest is the fact that these footage and photos, reportedly showing entertainment figures engaged in sexually explicit exertions, were originally shot with cell phones and disseminated from phone to phone before they ended up in the hands of showbiz reporters.

Of course, by airing the offending footage, even if pixilated and under the mantle of addressing public interest, the showbiz talk show hosts have elevated a private embarrassment into a public spectacle. They may even have ended up inadvertent marketers of the errant footage, stimulating interest and demand.

The shows' producers and hosts justify the airing of racy footage by stating that if the actors want to preserve their privacy, then they shouldn't allow themselves to be shot in compromising and potentially damaging positions.

But if, as the entertainers concerned have protested, they weren't the ones in the footage—and we do have to give them the benefit of the doubt—then they are being subjected to public humiliation and ridicule for no crime graver than having look-alikes who enjoy recording their escapades. And if there are indeed look-alikes in the incriminating footage, then they, too, have been punished for no other crime than looking like famous people.

* * *

BUT to return to the phone pornographers.

The people who shot the racy footage (who may even be the participants themselves), but more so the people who received these images, and then quickly, maybe eagerly, forwarded them to their entire address book, may not see themselves as pornographers. They're hardly motivated by the profit motive, they may protest; and they did the entire exercise more out of a sense of fun, naughtiness, curiosity and even desire to show off one's faddishness.

But in reality, they're no better or less morally challenged than pedophiles paying children to masturbate before a webcam, or your favorite DVD vendor peddling XXX-rated discs.

There's no rule that requires someone receiving a sexually explicit photo or footage to forward it to as many other recipients as possible. All one has to do with such content is to delete it, or even just archive it (for your private delectation?).

Plain journalistic decency also requires that before airing offensive footage, the producers and even the hosts of a show, at least, should try to ascertain the identity of the people involved. Personal perception ("I saw the video and he really looks like...") and hiding behind the excuse of speculation ("We're not really sure if that's..., but if true...") just doesn't cut it. And if the Movie Television Review and Classification Board, which is offended by sexy gowns but apparently not by carelessly aired sexually explicit footage, will not call the stations' attention, then, perhaps, professional associations can.

* * *

LIGHTEN up, some readers may be saying at this point. After all, the people complaining about being named in these naughty scenes are actors, public figures, who earn gobs of money by exposing themselves to public scrutiny. And if part of that scrutiny is sometimes painful or embarrassing, then it's all part of the game.

But the impact of the use of technology to spread images of people's private moments goes beyond the couple, or the phone pornographers or even the viewers of the salacious "news" items.

The casual spreading and airing of racy images, all discussed piously out of "concern" for the public welfare, creates an environment conducive to the sexual exploitation of children, says Arnie Trinidad in "Child Pornography in the Philippines."

"Studies have shown that exposure of children to pornographic images may desensitize them to pornography by making them think that pornography is normative. This exposure may, as a consequence, have negative psychological effects on children, leading them to think that sexual activity itself is equally "normal" or benign (for children)," says Trinidad.

Certainly, if their parents are spreading (or even recording) sexually explicit scenes on their cell phones, then children would be apt to conclude that not only is there nothing wrong with it, but also that they, too, can take part in it.

* * *

THE BOOK on child pornography has something very interesting to say about why foreign pedophiles seem to enjoy such easy access to Filipino children. Within the context of poverty, writes Trinidad, "it becomes easier to understand why Filipinos easily warm up to foreigners entering their communities. They see foreigners as bringing needed business to their communities...Becoming friends with foreigners also becomes a status symbol for the local folk...They see this as a source of prestige in the community because foreigners are considered important persons. Their pride heightens further when these foreigners make them their primary objects of philanthropy."

But while there are some foreign tourists motivated purely by a sense of friendship and charity in helping a poor family or child, others may not be so benign, and use the growing dependence of the child and family on his generosity to extract a heavy penalty: the innocence and the peace of mind of the child. There is no fairness in this form of trade.

Yes, we had Pinoy 'popes'

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

WATCHING the satellite broadcast of the Pope's funeral on cable TV, one had the chance of comparing images (clearest reception was on Spanish TV) and commentary (best was, again, Spanish TV and CNN). Visual and emotional spectacles were not enough; commentators had to identify the faces in the crowd, tell us what texts in Latin were being chanted in the background, and what part of the ritual was being done, etc.

As a historian, I would have wished to be in St. Peter's Square to personally witness all the proceedings, but I would have probably ended up in the bleachers. TV gave me a front-row seat. History was literally brought into my bedroom and into an estimated one billion other places worldwide. The best part of it all was that in this three-hour ceremony, I did not have to worry about going to the bathroom.

I saw our very own Cardinal Vidal in the row of cardinals in red vestments and white mitres. One commentator noted that among the missing was Jaime Cardinal Sin, who was eligible to vote in the Conclave but too ill to come to Rome. Sin was one of the three surviving cardinals who were given their red hats by Paul VI. The most prominent of the three is German Cardinal Ratzinger, who presided over the funeral rites. In 1978 there were two conclaves following the deaths of Paul VI and John Paul I, and I remember reading somewhere that Cardinal Sin was a contender for the papacy. Being the youngest cardinal at the time, it was he who would open the sealed door to let the cardinal electors out. It was also he who would assist the new pope as he tried the pontifical robes for the first time. We don't know if he got any votes because all the ballots and notes were burned. But surely one could not miss a candidate who was appropriately named "Cardinal Sin."

Speaking of Cardinal Sin, one of the text jokes I received last weekend goes this way: "Reporter: Your Eminence, does a Pinoy have any chance of getting elected pope? Cardinal Sin: Yes, if our Comelec will be the ones to count the ballots." *Aray!* Trust the Pinoy to dull the potentially sharp and painful commentary with humor.

Speaking of Pinoy popes, we have had a few unrecognized ones in the margins of our history. I vaguely remember a certain "Papa Isio" from the South, who led a revolt against the American colonial government. Going back to the shelves, I was lucky to find Vic Hurley's 1938 book, "Jungle Patrol: The Story of the Philippine Constabulary." I turned to Hurley (also the author of "Swish of the Kris") to look for material on Papa Isio. I found a whole chapter of different "popes" from all over the country and they gave the Americans a hard time. There were even four "Virgin Marys" locked up in various jails. Now, this is part of history we are not taught in our textbooks.

In Northern Luzon, there was Felipe Salvador, a colonel in Aguinaldo's army who did not surrender to the Americans and kept the resistance going. Naturally, he is painted in the worst possible manner by Hurley, who claimed that Salvador was a deserter from the revolution and that he ended up as a bandit. Salvador, as head of the Santa Iglesia "preached socialism, practiced polygamy and promised that land and other desirables would be distributed among his followers when the government was overthrown. He preached that there would come a great fire to destroy all unbelievers; and after the fire, a rain of gold and jewels would fall upon the faithful. He said that a wooden club would turn into a rifle if used bravely enough—but that lack of faith would leave it still a wooden club."

Aside from a penchant for long hair, Salvador had an appetite for young and pretty women. He was based in Arayat and, being head of a Santa Iglesia (Holy Church), he was considered by his followers as a pope. His surname also had a familiar ring to it: Salvador is the Spanish word for "Savior."

In Leyte, the group was called Dios-Dios and the "pope" was a certain Faustino Ablena who was based in the mountains near Ormoc. He was 55 years old when he was killed in an encounter with the Philippine Constabulary. Ablena was more than "pope" because he actually signed himself "Señor Jesus y Maria."

There was a "Papa" Pablo in Samar, a "Papa" Fernandez in Laguna and even a "King" in Pampanga.

Ruperto Rios of Tayabas was the most interesting. Not content with being "pope," the man—who established himself in the "new Jerusalem" on Mt. San Cristobal—later took on the titles "Viceroy of the Philippine Archipelago" and "Deliverer of the Philippines" and even "Son of God." Most fascinating was his bag of tricks—a box that was marked "Independencia." The followers of Rios believed that when opened "Independencia" would fly out of the box, like a genie out of a lamp, and put an end to labor, jail, taxes, and even the Philippine Constabulary.

I began with a search for Papa Isio and found so much more than I expected. While Hurley makes fun of these men and their followers, describing them as superstitious and ignorant Filipinos, historians reinterpreting the same material see beyond the religion and another form of resistance to colonial rule. Even today, we have similar characters in our midst who are ridiculed and laughed at when we should actually scratch the surface to see underneath the aspirations of simple Filipinos, then and now, for freedom, social justice, and the promise of a good life.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Soc Sci

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

ONE of the joys of being a teacher is running into students a few years after we've let them loose on the world. Once I ran into a former student—something like 10 years after he had graduated—who had become a top adviser to one of Metro Manila's mayors.

"Thanks, sir. Your subject changed the way I looked at the world."

"And in what ways?" I asked, wondering what difference I might have made in the governance of Metro Manila.

"In the ways I looked at courtship, marriage, women."

I realized he had taken "the sex course" or Anthro 187, which I haven't taught for many years now. But I'm glad to report that former students do come up with fond memories of less titillating classes, such as those in economic anthropology, or medical anthropology, or Anthro 1, the basic anthropology class. Lately, too, the younger ones talk about Anthro 10, which has the sexily deceptive title of "Bodies, Senses and Humanity."

More than bodies

I said sexily deceptive because, yes, we do have to work harder at UP (and, I'm sure, other universities) to get students to sign up for social science subjects. Which is a shame because it shows how stereotyped the social sciences are. Think social science (or social studies), and people think of memory work: names of presidents, number of provinces and cities, the date when Magellan "discovered" the Philippines (anyone who still teaches that "fact" should be hanged, drawn and quartered).

The students now live in exciting times with UP moving full speed with a new Revised General Education Program (RGEP) that allows students to choose for themselves the general education subjects they want. In the social science (Soc Sci, pronounced sok-sai) domain, students have an amazing, if not bewildering, menu—anthropology, demography, geography, history, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology—each department vying with the other with alluring titles and, I hope, new perspectives. (Anyone who still teaches that Magellan discovered the Philippines should be sent back to school.)

How do we get the social sciences to be more exciting? Well, think back of your own experiences in school. My own undergraduate work was in the natural sciences and veterinary medicine, but good social science teachers eventually got me into the social sciences. From PI 100 (Rizal and his works), the exciting part was going to Mt. Banahaw to see the Rizalist cults. I was in UP during the height of activism, and I had professors who made history alive, relating the issues to the present. One of them even disappeared halfway through the semester. Rumors were that she had gone underground.

I think now of the rising noise and excitement levels in my class around certain topics, and in what they write in their exams, or what they recall when we meet 10 years after they've taken the course, and I can tell you sex and bodies come last. My students remember precolonial archaeological diggings in the Philippines because many were unaware, until their Anthro 1 class, that the *Indio* may have been running around half-naked when the Spaniards arrived but with gold belts, gold-encrusted teeth and jade earrings. They remember the "Laguna copper plate," a 10th-century "affidavit" of sorts that emancipated a man who had worked off his debt. They remember the "simple" cages and traps made by our so-called "primitive" tribes, which American anthropologists and museum staff haven't been able to replicate.

More than dilettantes

I am conscious of the need to avoid transforming the social sciences into dilettante courses focusing on the exotic and strange. The social sciences come alive not with sensationalism but with helping students to become more introspective and insightful. The sex and culture class I taught was much less about sex than about gender, so students finish the course understanding why Kuya's being so privileged isn't just about age but about being male, or why having a woman president doesn't necessarily mean more pro-women policies.

A well-taught social science course whets the appetite and the curiosity the young have about life. My graduate classes bring in many non-anthropology students, including quite a few Catholic and Protestant pastors, nuns and priests who begin to rethink Filipino religion and spirituality—from our constant talking to God to our love of the Santo Niño. These aren't theoretical exercises: in my "Language and Culture" course, I teach students about intertextuality. Translation? That's reading between the lines, including how and why your husband or partner lie through his or her teeth.

As a medical anthropologist, I can tell you that social sciences go a long way toward improving the way health professionals interact with patients, the way hospital technologies are used (remember how anxious you were as you had the MRI?), and the way hospital spaces are planned. I'll be modest and say, we're still getting there, just watch out for new programs at UP's medical school as well as that other great Filipino university's (Ateneo, in case you weren't sure) upcoming medical and public health school.

Governance maybe

Will the social sciences help in nation-building? Hmm...that's a tall order. I'm pessimistic if it's in terms of training future politicians.

The key toward understanding issues around nationhood may come not from the usual social sciences but from philosophy. At UP, we're structured to have a College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, "philosophy" coming on not as an afterthought but as the heart of the social sciences. Right before this column, I was rushing through a presentation for a bioethics workshop where I'll talk about how ethics draws from culture to shape law, religion and medicine.

The social sciences and philosophy combined can make a difference for the nation, if at least to help people rethink *"gobyerno,"* that governance isn't just about politicians and patronage, but about each of us developing our moral compasses to question the status quo and to craft a new ethos of citizenship. The social sciences, philosophy included, can provide a formidable tool box for us to make society, and a nation.

Summer training programs

Okay, that was a long way of plugging our college's summer training seminars. From April 19 to 22 we will have several social science professors teaming up to do "Cutting Edge Issues in Philippine Social Sciences: Updates on Research Methodologies and Teaching Strategies." Dr. Danilo Tuazon will do a workshop from April 25 to 29 on "Teaching with the Brain and Body in Mind," and from May 2 to 6 he will do "Optimizing Learning in Classroom and Office Environments." To cap off the summer, the CSSP Computer Laboratory will do "A Beginner's Guide to Linux" from May 9 to 10 and May 16 to 17.

Log on to www.kssp.upd.edu.ph/admin for more information, or contact Ma. Dolores Castro at 926-2511 or at 920-5301 local 6785.

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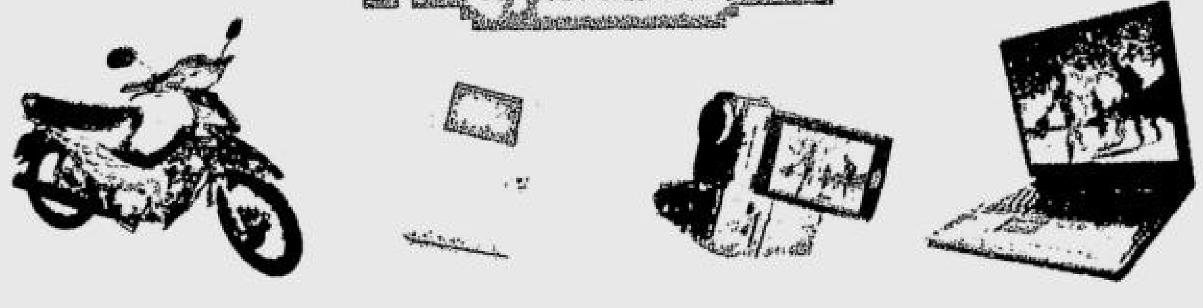

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MECHANICS

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Slaves as products of colonial education

THE SPEECH of former Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus to graduates of the Ateneo de Manila University last March 9, published by the INQUIRER, was an eye-opener. His mea culpa for and criticism of our present leadership for having made a mess of our country were appropriate. But it did not go deep enough.

His proposal to extend the period of elementary and high school education to 11 years to improve the quality of our education is a simple placebo. What is wrong with our educational system is not its technical structure. We have numerous experts in education, armed with doctoral and masteral degrees, who have submitted innumerable proposals for educational reforms. Some of the proposed reforms have been adopted by the government, such as the creation of the Commission on Higher Education which was proposed by the Joint Congressional Commission on Education in 1991. And yet the quality of our education continues to deteriorate.

What is wrong with our education is its content. It is a colonial education. It lacks a national purpose. It lacks nationalism. Our educational system is focused on preparing the individual for financial success and for earning a living. But it does not imbue him with nationalism, with the intense desire to build a country he can be proud of, a country that is just and provides all its citizens with the equal opportunity to become productive, to stand with dignity and to be independent.

As a result, we have graduates who cannot live and work in their own country because they have a country that cannot give them the opportunity to apply what they have learned in school. Modern education has become irrelevant in a country that is colonial and reactionary. Nothing illustrates this better than that we are now turning out graduates to work in foreign lands, for foreign employers in jobs below their educational qualifications and talents—teachers as housemaids, doctors as nurses, engineers as construction workers, and lawyers as clerks.

To top it all, our leadership elite are not at all unhappy about it and encourage migration to obtain money to pay the gargantuan debt they have incurred in the name of the country but used for their own interests. Our colonial education produces colonial slaves both at home and abroad. It perpetuates also a colonial elite that exploit their own people on behalf of their foreign masters.

—MANUEL F. ALMARIO,
mfalmario@yahoo.com

Can we make JPII proud of us?

I FELT I just lost a father. Never in my life have I felt so much for someone I have never met. I was in a supermarket when my husband called me to relay the news that the Santo Papa was dying. I stood still for a moment, thinking maybe it would be a good time for me to go home. Upon arrival, I rushed to watch the news on television. As I saw images of him and listened to newsmen's updates on his failing health, tears welled from my eyes. I was alone and felt stupid for crying. I would turn the TV off, only to turn it on again as a way of staying by his side in his final hours. At 5 o'clock Saturday morning (April 2), the news came. I cried again, this time realizing I was not alone.

It's almost amazing how millions of people around the world could feel an enormous sense of loss and grief over the death of someone who was not even their relative. But, of course, it would have been much stranger not to feel that way for Pope John Paul II.

No, I am not that religious. In fact, I only started attending Sunday Masses regularly after I married. Prayer became more significant at the onset of motherhood. Being a mother made me look for persons, other than members of my family, who could provide me a sense of security that the world will be all right for my children. Pope John Paul II was one them. He was an icon of faith who exemplified Jesus Christ's teachings through action. He was a man of peace in the truest sense of the word.

When someone is asked about his or her wishes, do you notice that "world peace" is mentioned, almost always? But the wish has become commonplace we forget that we have a significant part to play in order to make it real. Pope John Paul II never forgot. In his capacity as leader of the Roman Catholic Church, he reached out even to members of other religions, emphasizing the similarities in their faiths instead of the differences.

In this period of immense grief over his passing, I pray that his legacy be not forgotten. Especially by the leaders of the world and of our nation. I pray that the next pope would live just as well and be just as inspiring as Pope John Paul II.

I pray that each one of us will make the late Santo Papa feel proud and show him that his efforts in rearing us as dutiful children of God were not spent in vain.

—ANGELA CASTAÑEDA-MELO,
7 Don Miguel St.,
San Juan, Metro Manila

A prayerful suggestion for Migrante

THIS is in reaction to a letter from Migrante International on Japan's "New Immigration Act," which appeared on the March 29 issue of the INQUIRER.

Let us not call the law discriminatory. The Japanese government has every right to enact laws that it deems beneficial to its people. Neither should we demonstrate in front of the Japanese Embassy to demand that Japan revoke the new immigration law just so Filipinos can go to Japan to work without the proper documents.

Instead, the members of Migrante, and anybody who wants to join, can organize a prayer brigade in front of the Japanese Embassy (make sure that the group will get a valid permit for this activity). This would be more peaceful. To make the prayer assembly more meaningful, do it for seven consecutive days.

The object of prayer should be to remind the Japanese government and to make the Japanese people aware of what their Imperial Army did 60 years ago during the Battle for Manila, where thousands of innocent civilians were slaughtered. The emphasis of the prayer should be that such inhumanity would not be repeated in any part of the Philippines or in any part of the world. Not ever again.

—GREG M. ASPIRAS,
gma3175@yahoo.ca

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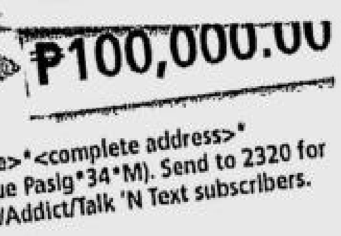

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Solon hits gov on ₱1.2-B fund for Palawan projects

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Palawan Second District Rep. Abraham Mitra has accused Gov. Joel Reyes of neglecting other Palawan officials, including himself and 1st District Rep. Antonio Alvarez, in deciding which projects should be funded by the first tranche of the province's share in the Malampaya gas project.

Mitra said Reyes already submitted the list of projects to the Department of Energy (DOE) "without consulting them."

"*Nung mahina siya, gusto niya sama-sama pero pag nakuha na niya ang gusto niya ay sinosolo na niya* (When he needed help, he wanted us to work with him but when he got what he wanted he is doing it his way)," Mitra said.

According to him, when Reyes needed their support to negotiate with the national government, the governor was constantly talking with them but when the interim agreement was already signed, he had no time to even discuss the projects.

Reyes denied all of the accusations by saying that Mitra and Alvarez were duly notified of the projects. He said he had to submit the list of projects before March 15 because former Energy Secretary Vince Perez was about to leave his post.

It was during Perez's time when the interim agreement was signed. He was succeeded by Raphael Lotilla.

"Records would show *sa* project listing *na may* congressional allocation *na* P100 million per district (Records would show that there was P100 million allocated for congressional districts)," Reyes said.

He said he had no intention of ignoring the listing of the two congressmen but until now, he said he had not seen it yet.

Reyes said there was still a chance that projects intended for their districts be included in the Malampaya fund because it was just the first tranche, which costs around P600 million.

The agreement indicates that Palawan will receive half of the 40-percent share from the Malampaya revenue.

It paves the way for the release of P1.2 billion, representing half of the 40-percent share minus the P600 million financial assistance released to the province last year.

Reyes added that the intention of talking to the two congressmen about the distribution of projects was made known to them earlier.

He said he asked Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn to facilitate the meetings.

However, Mitra was not fully convinced.

He said Reyes broke his promise before the signing of the agreement that he would discuss the projects with them.

Alvarez could not be sought for comment for he is in the United States having a vacation with his family. *Jofelle Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Politics behind slapping report, says board member

A LEADING provincial board member of Pampanga called on all local leaders to disavow dirty politics and work as one for the upliftment of Central Luzon, as he stressed that malicious reports of conflict among Kapampangan political leaders could only do harm to the province.

"This is why I am taking great pains to debunk the falsehood that there was any untoward incident between myself and Congressman Mikey Arroyo—so that our people would be assured that the political leadership in Pampanga is working harmoniously," said Nelson Calara, provincial board member of Pampanga.

In a press statement, Calara said it was entirely untrue that there was a slapping incident involving him and Representative Arroyo, as he said reports of this could have been peddled by malicious minds out to undermine the close relationship of the two.

"Mikey and I are very close, both as friends and colleagues. Ordinarily, I would just laugh these reports off . . . But perhaps it is also my responsibility as an elected public official to clearly clarify that nothing of that sort of incident happened," his statement said.

Ombudsman files graft raps vs engineer over ₱120-M irrigation scam

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

TAGBILARAN CITY—The Office of the Ombudsman in the Visayas based in Cebu City has recommended the filing of graft charges against provincial irrigation officer Calixto Seroje in connection with the P120-million Talibon Dam irrigation project anomaly.

The nine-page report, dated March 28, was signed by associate graft investigation officer II Leny Lim and approved by Visayas Ombudsman Director Virginia Palanca-Santiago.

The report stemmed from the complaints filed by the Boholanos Against Corruption, Oppression and Social Harassment (Bacosh) represented by engineer Petronilo Sarigumba and the Association of Concerned Filipinos of Talibon, Bohol Inc. led by Felipe de la Torre.

Docketed as CPL-V-04-0376 and CPL-V-04-477 respectively, the subject of both complaints was the alleged irregularities in the implementation of the small reservoir irrigation project (SRIP) undertaken by the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) in Barangay (village) Zamora, Talibon town, Bohol.

Sarigumba alleged that the NIA had disbursed a total of P116,126,434.89 against the alleged actual value of accomplishment in the sum of P139,057,860.83.

The complainant said in an actual inspection of the project site in November 2003, the only visible physical accomplishment were an office building, an access road leading to the reservoir site, a 10-meter concrete bridge and laid RC pipes.

"How could NIA have accomplished P18,095,081.00 for dam embankment when the ongoing work by SCP is still on the foundation of the reservoir itself," he asked.

Sarigumba also noted that while the program of work called for the sum of P10,432,098 for steel bars, the actual purchase exceeded the plan at P11,794,913.

"Where are the steel bars when only a concrete bridge, about 10 meters can be seen at job site?" he asked further.

In recommending for the filing of graft charges, Lim relied heavily on the results of an investigation conducted by a NIA fact-finding team created by then Administrator Jesus Emmanuel Paras.

One notable finding was that Seroje, in response to the allegation of the complainants, reported that the expenditures for reinforcing steel bars worth P11,710,440.50 was rectified to P5,250,193.26 during the investigation.

3 Army men killed as jeep hits landmine

SAN MARIANO, Isabela—Three Army soldiers were killed while three others were wounded in a landmine explosion in Barangay Minanga here early yesterday.

Army Capt. George Domingo, 502nd Infantry Brigade operations officer based in Jones town, identified the victims as 2nd Lt. Arsenio Alipio, team leader of the 45th Infantry Battalion detachment in Barangay Alibadabad here, and his men, Cpl. Antonio Macni and Pfc. Michael Pagalilauan.

Wounded were Pfc. Diosdado Cabueñas, Pfc. Nestor Versoza and Private Reynald Navarro, all of the 45th IB in this town. They were taken to the Camp Melchor de la Cruz Hospital in Gamu town.

Domingo said New People's Army rebels operating in the area planted the landmine.

Police said Alipio's group was returning to the 5th Infantry Division headquarters in Gamu at about 5 a.m. Tuesday when their jeep hit the landmine at Sitio Casisiitan in Minanga.

Domingo said the soldiers were to attend a ceremony in the 5th ID headquarters where they would be honored for seizing a rebel camp. *Villamor Visaya, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau and Ansbert Joaquin, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

MNLF eyes ARMM gov post

COTABATO CITY—A ranking official of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) said they will seek the intervention of the influential Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) if the administration's official candidate for the Aug. 8 Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) elections would not come from their group.

Hatimil Hasan, MNLF chair and ARMM regional legislative assembly speaker, said they will bring the issue to the attention of the OIC if government failed to anoint an MNLF member as the administration's gubernatorial candidate.

Hasan said that based on the provisions of the peace agreement signed in 1996, the government anointed the candidacies of MNLF leaders Nur Misuari and Parouk Hussin.

Misuari is now detained on charges of leading an armed rebellion in Sulu. *Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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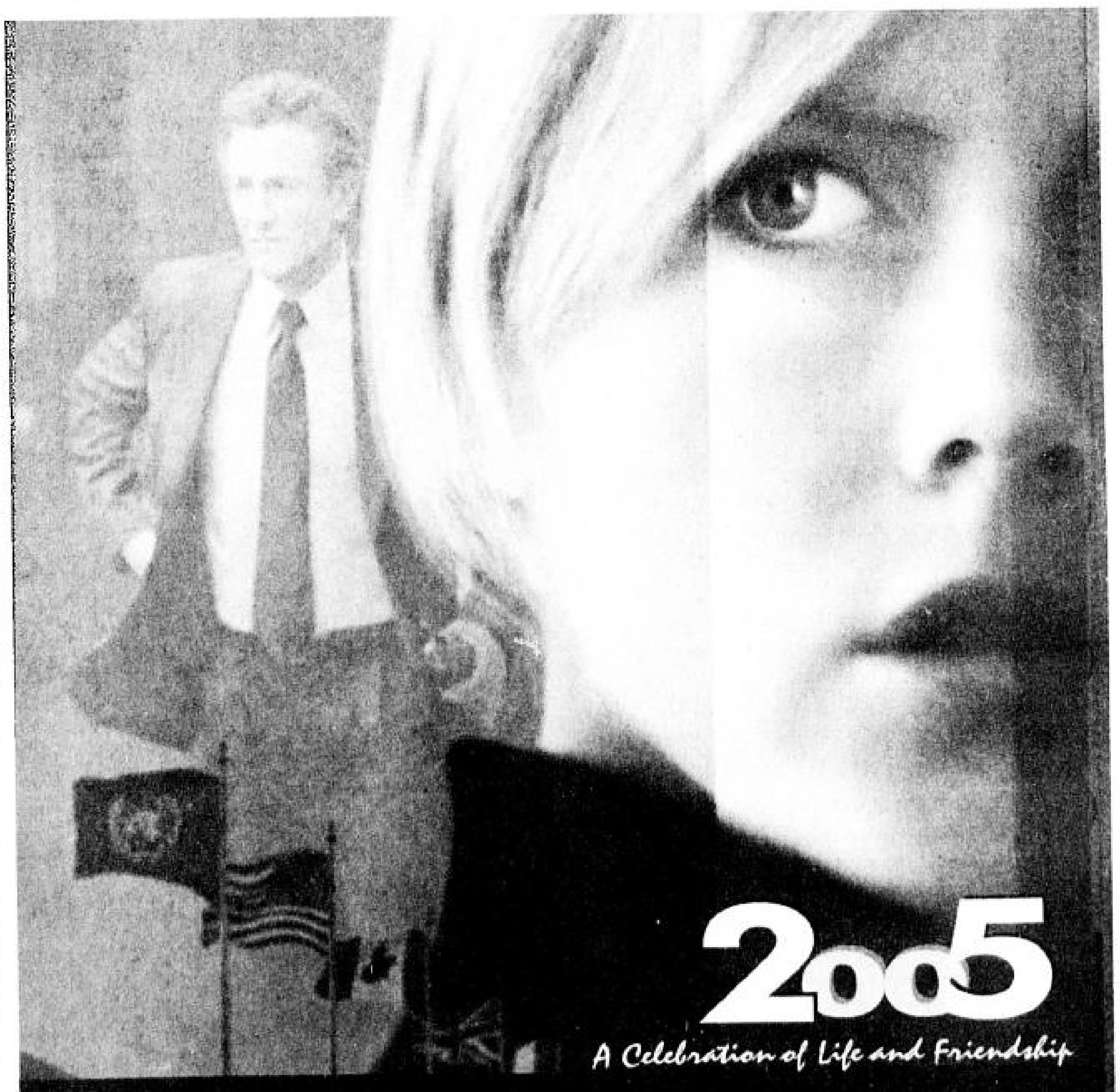

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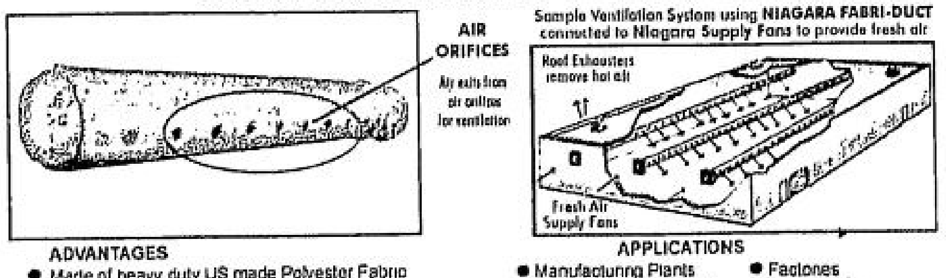
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Move to evict Ati folk from Boracay stopped

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) has issued a 20-day temporary restraining order (TRO) barring the eviction of the Ati community from the land they occupy on Boracay Island.

In a two-page order dated April 11, lawyer Sulpicio Gamosa Jr., NCIP regional hearing officer for Western and Eastern Visayas, directed all holders of tax declarations claiming ownership of the property where the Atis reside to desist "from committing any act or acts which (are) expressly or impliedly tantamount to the summary eviction" of the community.

The TRO was issued in relation to a petition for the issuance of a preliminary injunction against the claimants.

The order did not specify the claimants but the Ati village sits on adjacent properties of the families of provincial board member Jose Yap and Aklan Rep. Florencio Miraflores in Sitio Bolabog in Barangay Balabag, one of three villages of Boracay.

The TRO was prompted by a complaint filed by Arnulfo Francisco, NCIP regional legal officer, representing the Ati community led by tribal chief Delsa Justo.

NCIP chair Reuben Dasay Lingating ordered the filing of the complaint to address reports of threats to evict the Ati community.

In the five-page complaint dated April 7, Francisco said the Ati community is in danger of being evicted due to alleged "illegal acts," including threats, bribery, fraud and stealth against members of the community.

Caretakers of the claimants have also erected barbed wire fences around the community restricting the movement of the villagers, according to nuns of the Holy Rosary Parish Ati Mission (HRPAM) who live with the Atis.

Francisco petitioned for the TRO and preliminary injunction while the ownership dispute is being settled.

He cited the Ati's pending application for the issuance of a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) over the entire island filed on Dec. 15, 2001 and reiterated in a follow-up petition on April 14, 2003.

In the CADT application signed by 31 elders and members of the community, the Atis claimed that they are the earliest inhabitants of the island. Their elders had named most places on the island including the island's name, they said.

The Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (Pafid) has confirmed the claim of the Atis pointing out that more than 20 Atis were living on Boracay before tourists and other settlers from outside of the island started flocking to Boracay.

But Aklan Rep. Florencio Miraflores said the landowners, including his family, are the "victims" in the ownership dispute.

He claimed that he granted the request of the (Daughters of Charity) to erect a mission house on the land owned by his grandfather Alfonso Miraflores on condition that the mission house and any other structures be removed when his family would need the land.

"My family and I are very sad that my little act of kindness in 1999 will embroil me in a controversy with the Atis, the Church and the media five years later," Miraflores said in a letter to the INQUIRER.

He said Atis from the mainland flocked to the village after the mission house was built on his family's property.

The congressman said the Atis have insisted on staying on the island despite the availability of a 74-hectare relocation site in Barangay Cogon in Malay town in the mainland.

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NINO JESUS ORBETA/PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Hundreds of candles were lit to grieve the death of Pope John Paul II at the Our Lady of Assumption Church in Guinobatan, Albay, one of the most devoutly Catholic towns in the country.

Study says diesel threat to Baguio folk health

BAGUIO CITY—Diesel soot from buses, trucks and sports utility vehicles, which causes eight times as many cancer cases as other air pollutants combined, may be endangering the health of Baguio residents.

During a forum on alternative fuel sponsored by the city government and the United States Agency for International Development on Monday, Rafael Diaz, managing director of the Asian Institute of Petroleum Studies, said the city is very vulnerable to diesel soot.

Diaz quoted a study of the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States showing that diesel soot is not only the leading cause of cancer from air pollution but also causes asthma attacks, heart attacks and cases of bronchitis.

He said diesel soot is caused mostly by dirty and defective engine condition and poor quality of fuel leading to inefficient combustion and carbon deposits in the exhaust system of vehicles causing smoke emission.

Baboo Mondoñedo, a founding member of the Baguio Regreening Movement, said a draft of the National Air Quality Status Report for 2003–2004 attests to the deteriorating quality of air in Baguio.

Mondoñedo said the draft report showed that Baguio is among cities with a level of registered total suspended particulates (TSP) at more than twice the national air quality guidelines.

Other cities included in the report's "bad air list" are San Fernando City in La Union, Iloilo City, Zamboanga City and Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro.

A 2002 World Bank study showed that Baguio's air quality was deteriorating.

Blaming media

But instead of doing stop gap measures, city officials then castigated the media for reporting on the study.

The Philippine Environment Monitor in 2002 said the government is spending over $400 million annually on health expenses spawned by air pollution, despite efforts to improve air quality.

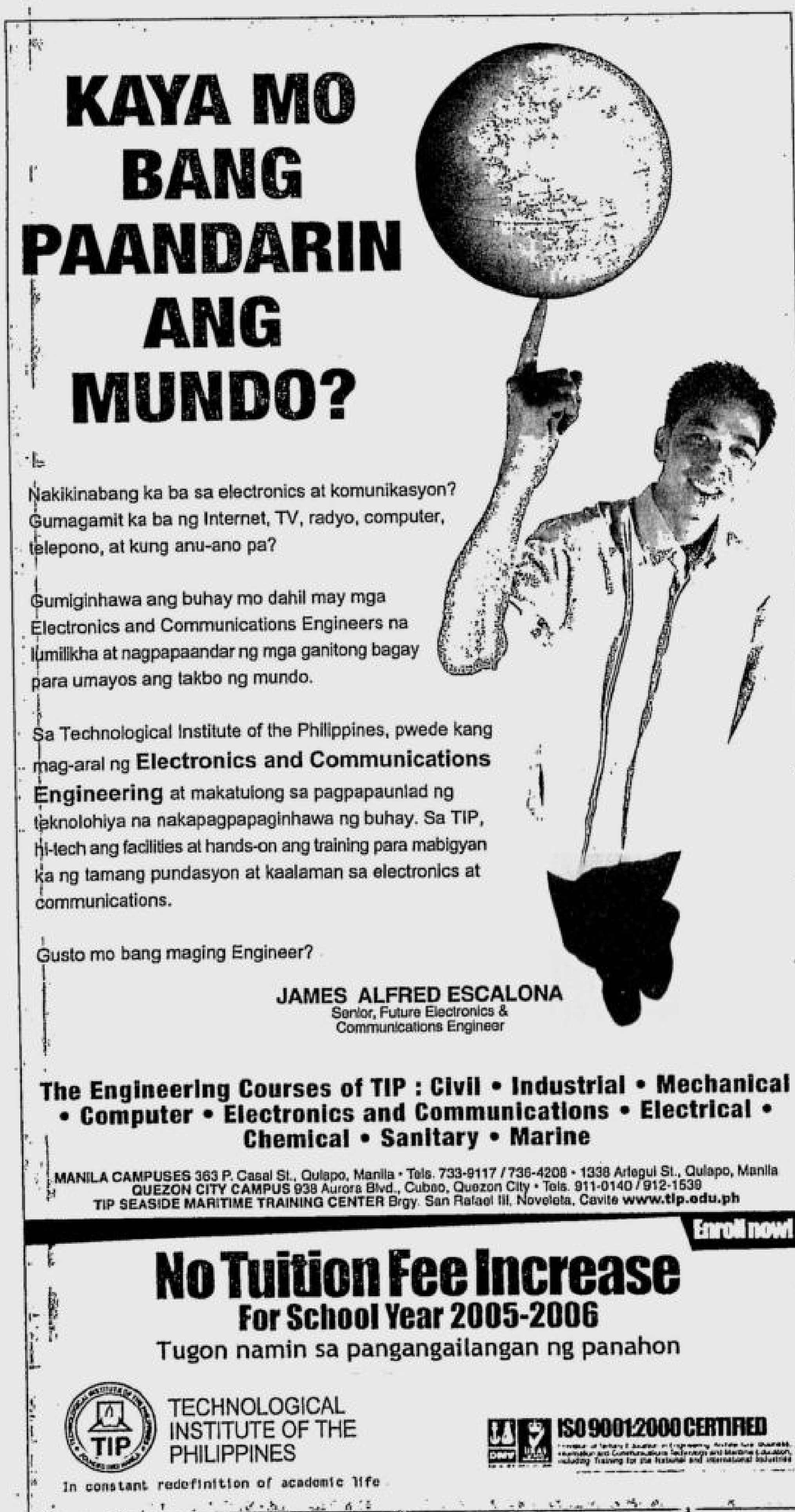
The Philippine Clean Cities Program chose Baguio as its pilot site in the hope that the air quality of the country's summer capital would improve.

Councilor Erdolfo Balajadia, BRM president and chair of the PCCP for Baguio, said some councilors are a little apathetic in solving the city's air pollution problem.

Balajadia cited as example his recent resolution calling for the Department of Transportation and Communication to establish a smoke emission testing center.

Instead, he said the council committee sided with the DOTC's reason that the agency cannot establish such a center because of the fiscal crisis.

Local officials have accused the DOTC of issuing too many certificates of public conveyance and reviving expired franchises that led to the increase in the number of taxicabs in the city. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*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EC invites NGOs, LGUs to grants, fund program

THE EUROPEAN Commission (EC) has announced that funding is being made available to nonprofit organizations and local government units in the Philippines.

Information on these funding programs were given by the Delegation of the EC to the Philippines during a session in Davao City on March 18, according to a news release.

This was the fifth information session on funding opportunities and the second one in Davao. Similar events have been held last year in Davao, Cebu, Manila and Baguio.

The programs cater to economic cooperation, governance, strengthening of civil society, democracy and human rights, development and rehabilitation, decentralization, gender, health, the environment and energy, higher education and research.

Grants range from about P1 million to P30 million.

These programs have an allocated funding of more than P2.5 billion for projects in several fields. In Mindanao alone in 2004, grant commitments ran to a total of P760 million.

Grant beneficiaries in Mindanao are working on rehabilitation and aid to uprooted people.

However, grant opportunities from the EC exist in several other areas, from grassroot intervention to policy initiatives in economic development and governance.

Priority areas for these proposals focus on governance, economic relations between the Philippines and the EU, and corporate governance. Deadlines for submission of applications are June 9, and Sept. 12. For details, visit http://www.delphl.cec.eu.int or call Thelma Gecolea, public affairs officer of the EC delegation, (02)859-5100.

Woman, son killed as bus slams jeep in Quezon town

PAGBILAO, Quezon—A woman and his son were killed while another son was injured by a wayward jeep while they were walking on a sidewalk along the Maharlika Highway in Sitio Pulong Guiting, Barangay Silangang Malicboy in this town early Monday morning.

Police identified the victims as Myrna Lariosa, 36, and Rommer, 13, both residents of the said village.

The other boy, Judel, 10, was seriously injured and is confined in a local hospital here.

Investigators said the suspect, Edgardo Regencia, 32, a teacher from Mulanay, Quezon, was driving his jeep from Pitogo town and was headed to Pagbilao.

A 10-wheel truck coming from the opposite direction overtook another vehicle and occupied the lane where the jeep was.

The truck sideswiped the left side of the coming jeep, causing it to swerve and fatally hit the victims on the sidewalk.

The victims were rushed to the Jane County Hospital in the poblacion but the woman and her son were pronounced dead on arrival.

In a related report, a photographer riding in a motorcycle was also killed in the same portion of the Maharlika Highway on Friday after he was bumped by an AB Liner bus bearing license plate DVD-175.

Police identified the victim as Eduardo Reyes, 52, a resident of Barangay Silangang Malicboy.

He was also declared dead on arrival at the Jane County Hospital. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

ROUNDUP

17 soldiers hurt in mishap

COTABATO CITY—At least 17 soldiers sent to reinforce their colleagues, who were fighting communist guerrillas in a remote village of Banisilan, North Cotabato on Saturday, were hurt when the military truck they were riding plunged into a ravine. Col. Franklin del Prado, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said on Tuesday that the truck driver lost control of the steering wheel while negotiating a sharp curve in Barangay Salama, also in Banisilan. Del Prado said that 10 of the 17 injured were from the Army's 3rd Infantry Battalion and seven were from the 37th Infantry Battalion. *Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

P4-M in marijuana seized

CAMP DANGWA, Benguet—More than P4 million worth of marijuana bricks were seized from two persons in Sablan town on Sunday. Personnel of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the Benguet and Sablan police arrested Romeo Pascual, 50, and Marissa Balisi, 40, both residents of Binondo, Manila, in an entrapment operation. Policemen searched the suspects' Hyundai van and found 47 marijuana bricks worth P4.7 million.
Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

NPA rebel yields

BANGUED, Abra—A member of the New People's Army operating in Abra surrendered to Lacub Mayor Cesar Baroña recently. Police chief Director General Arturo Lomibao presented Nancy Sabado, former medical officer of a unit of the NPA's Agustin Begnalen Command. "It was the best decision of her life," Lomibao said, referring to Sabado's surrender. Sabado, a native of Lacub town, has an arrest warrant for her involvement in the 2003 burning of government property in Tineg town.
Leoncio Balbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

New KBP-Quezon execs

LUCENA CITY—The Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas-Quezon chapter inducted into office the following new officers: Noel Galvez (BIG Sound-FM), chair; Neil Singson (dzEL), vice chair; Edgar Maceda (dwKL), treasurer; Marita Gabiola (Love radio), secretary; Rustom Alvarez (Magik FM), auditor. Mar Bodino of rgMA was the immediate past chair. Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala, who was the guest speaker during the occasion, asked the media to adhere always to fair and balanced reporting. Serge Ramonde, head of government mass media group and guest of the local KBP, also asked his colleagues to unite to show the enemies of press freedom that they will never be cowed by bullets and libel suits. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

The last Kamikaze stand in Bamban

By Tonette Orejas
Bamban, Tarlac

A MONUMENT of a "kamikaze" pilot has been erected at the peace memorial on Asahiyama Hill in Bamban, Tarlac.

BEFORE the "Holocaust of Manila" in February 60 years ago, battles were fiercely fought in Bamban, Tarlac, from where American troops penetrated Luzon and the city of Manila.

In Bamban, the Kapampangan town located 99 km north of Manila, the Kembu group of the Japanese Imperial Army waged its "Sho-Go," or its "decisive battle" in the Pacific.

More than 42,000 soldiers were mobilized, including ace fighters and Kamikaze suicide pilots, to stop the return of large US military contingents via Leyte Gulf in the south and Lingayen Gulf in the north, as early as October 1944.

This was more than two years after the Japanese seized Clark Air Base and Fort Stotsenburg (Sapang Bato) in Angeles City, south of Bamban. The bases were expanded to include Porac in western Pampanga, Mabalacat in northern Pampanga, and Bamban in the north, according to archival documents and oral accounts obtained by the Bamban Historical Society.

As events went and in spite of elaborate defense lines established by the Japanese in the plains and hills of Bamban, US soldiers from the 160th Infantry Regiment and the 640th Cavalry of the Army's 40th Division entered the town on foot from Lingayen Gulf on Jan. 23, 1945.

The military combat film "40th Division Enters Bamban," which the BHS obtained from the US National Archives, showed Gen. Douglas MacArthur making a front-line field inspection on that day.

Using Route 3, more known as the MacArthur Highway, the US Army advanced south to retake Clark and head for Manila.

From the hills, the Japanese resisted, waging battles until March of 1945.

"Very little is mentioned about the importance of Bamban at various junctures in history," historian Rhonie de la Cruz, BHS president, said.

Military past

A former large lowland Aeta settlement that was the target of Augustinian missions in 1716, Bamban evolved into a pueblo of Tagalog and Kapampangan migrants.

The Aeta, described to be "fierce and untamable," retreated to the hills on the west, which were part of the Zambales mountain ranges.

By 1874, Bamban, Capas, Concepcion and Tarlac towns were separated from Pampanga to form part of what is now Tarlac province. The Paruao (Sacobia-Bamban) River separated the two provinces.

Bounded by Mt. Arayat on the east, the hills on the west, and the river on the south, Bamban became the fort from where Gen. Francisco Makabulos defended the republic from pursuing American troops in 1899.

Here, President Emilio Aguinaldo supervised the construction of a multitude of entrenchments and fortifications, from the Abacan River in Angeles City down to the Sacobia-Bamban River, before his retreat to Isabela.

The Bamban bridge section of the Manila-Dagupan rail line, opened to traffic in 1892, became a toughly contested structure at the start of the Japanese-American war. The 21st Division of the Philippine Army, led by Maj. Gen. Tomas Capinpin, captured the bridge through successful ambushes on Japanese soldiers from Dec. 31, 1941 to Jan. 1, 1942.

Air field

The military significance of Bamban was not lost to the Japanese, De la Cruz said.

With forced Filipino labor, the 4th Air Army completed the Bamban air field in February 1944. Operated until January 1945, the secret base surrounded the villages of Pacalcal, Bical, Quematen, Damulag and Culabasa.

"It could accommodate 2,400 heavy bombers, and transport and miscellaneous planes. Various revetments and 120 mm antiaircraft cannons were positioned around the base," De la Cruz said. He noted that the Japanese naval air fleets also used the base.

Anticipating US air offensive, the Japanese military fielded the 20th Air Regiment on the Bamban-Caloocan air routes In September 1944.

The Japanese Navy's Air Group 201, 311th Squadron of the First Air Fleet was assigned at the Bamban air field for surprise attack mission. The Army's 251st Bomber Unit was also mobilized with concentration point at Bamban and Mabalacat west air fields.

More naval and army units, as well as aircraft, were directed from Taiwan and Japan to the Bamban air field.

US planes took the first ever image of the Bamban air field on Sept. 21, 1944. Since then, the air raids happened almost daily under the tactic called "Big Blue Blanket."

Civilians fled for their lives.

The Filipino guerrilla movement, called Squadron 13 under Kumander Liwanag, thrived. Some 3,000 Aeta warriors were with the 155th US Forces in the Philippines.

Suicide squadrons

Vice Admiral Takijuro Ohnishi organized the Kamikaze Special Attack or *tokko-tai* on Oct. 19, 1944 in Mabalacat. Pilots were gathered from the Air Group 201.

De la Cruz, reading from translated documents, said Ohnishi "believed there was no other alternative to neutralize the gigantic American force converging at Leyte Gulf other than 'suicide attack units composed of Zero fighters armed with 250-kg bombs, with each place to crash-drive into an enemy carrier.'"

By Oct. 25, the "use of Kamikaze tactics was made compulsory for all pilots as sanctioned by the Japanese high command."

According to De la Cruz, the remaining Hayate Ki84s planes were ordered for special attack and converted into a kamikaze unit.

At the same time, the Japanese Army's 73rd Air Regiment was transferred from Mabalacat east air field to the Bamban air field. The suicide missions by navy and army planes attacked the American convoy approaching Lingayen Gulf.

On Jan. 13, 1945, the 72nd and 73rd Air Regiments participated in the last organized kamikaze mass attacks.

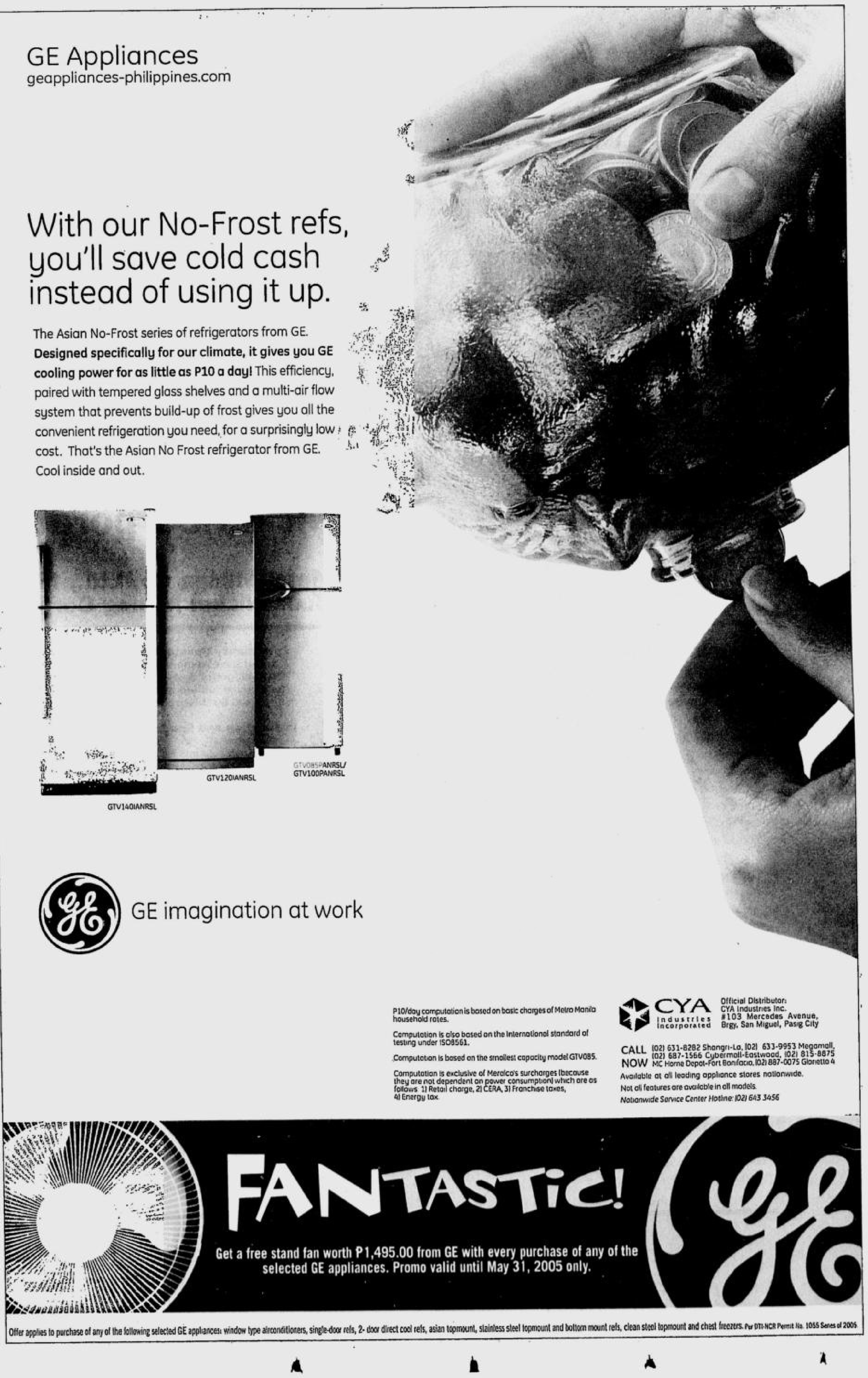
The town from which those missions were launched suffered heavily. B24 Liberator planes bombed Bamban from Jan. 18 to 21, devastating it to the ground, De la Cruz said.

Bamban, one of the towns most devastated by the war, crept back slowly. In the 1960s, the provincial government built a Lourdes grotto on Asahiyama (Hill 500 or Stout Hill to the Americans, Bantiti to the Aetas) as a convergent point for peace prayers.

The pilgrimage by descendants of soldiers and their surviving comrades began in the 1970s. It was only on Oct. 25, 1999 that tombstones were dedicated in Bamban by Japanese Bishop Ekan Ikeguchi for the repose of Filipino, American and Japanese soldiers.

De la Cruz said the rites of remembering were not done to glorify the war and their participants.

"It's for an understanding of the past and seeking lessons from that for our generations and the next. The need for peace is the most important lesson of that war," De la Cruz said.



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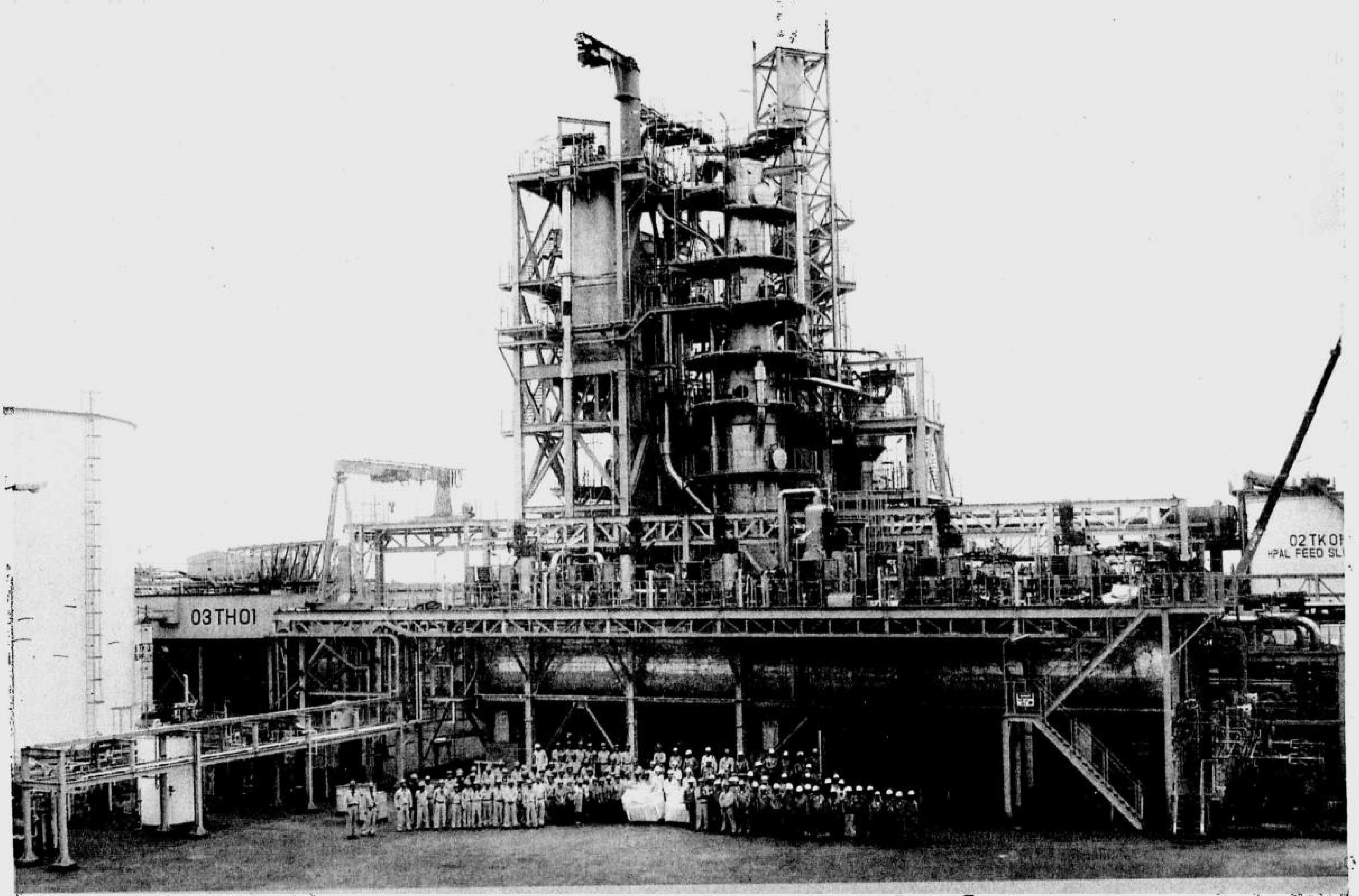

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Senate will pass VAT bill tonight, says Drilon

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE SENATE will be able to pass the value-added tax (VAT) bill tonight after senators threshed out contentious issues during a three-hour caucus on Monday night, Senate President Franklin Drilon said yesterday.

Drilon said it was agreed upon at the caucus that the Senate would bat for the retention of the 10-percent VAT rate and the lifting of the exemptions, including on fuel and professionals like doctors and lawyers.

Drilon said that lifting the exemption of the power sector was contentious and that the senators agreed to subject it to a vote during the session.

But Senators Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Mar Roxas and Juan Ponce Enrile said they "have the numbers" to push for the continued exemption of the power sector from VAT.

At around 8 p.m. last night, the senators voted to subject power companies to a 10 percent VAT despite an effort by some administration and opposition senators to block the provision.

The motion of Santiago to exempt from VAT the sales of electricity by generation, transmission and distribution companies was defeated 11-9.

Santiago and Roxas had opposed the committee's position to lift the exemption on the power companies, saying this would result in even higher power rates.

But the Senate minority rejected this. Before voting on Santiago's motion, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. sought a suspension of the session for the minority to hold a caucus to agree on their position.

By 6 last night, the senators were able to vote in favor of two major provisions—raising the corporate income tax from 32 percent to 35 percent for four years and lifting the exemption of domestic airlines and shipping companies.

The senators approved the increase in corporate income tax from 32 percent to 35 percent up to Jan. 1, 2009 after which the rate should revert to 32 percent.

Senators Enrile, Edgardo Angara and Richard Gordon voted against the provision which, according to Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the Senate ways and means committee, would generate P12.3 billion.

Recto initially proposed that the corporate income tax be reduced to 30 percent after three years but the senators approved the amendment proposed by Sen. Manuel Villar that the rate be restored to the present 32 percent.

Airlines

Sen. Jamby Mardigal pushed for the exemption from VAT of airlines and shipping firms transporting passengers and cargo within the country. Her motion lost by a vote of 10-7.

The voting came after a heated exchange between Recto and Gordon, who wanted to know how the application of VAT on airlines and ships would affect tourism.

"We hope to be able to finish everything, if not tonight, I am sure that by tomorrow evening we will finish everything and vote on it on third reading and put the VAT before the bicameral conference committee," Drilon said before the session opened.

"I am confident that before the month is over, before April 30, we will be able to present to the President a version for her signature," Drilon said.

Bicam panel

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said he met with House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles yesterday morning to discuss the bicameral conference. The Senate has yet to constitute its panel in the bicam.

"(We will have) voting tonight until tomorrow and hopefully by Thursday and Friday we can already have the bicam," Pangilinan said.

He said it would be difficult to reconcile the two versions. "Both chambers recognize that we will have to compromise and we will have to have a VAT measure in place."

Drilon defended the chamber's decision to discus the individual amendments in a closed-door caucus on Monday night instead of tackling it openly in the session where everything is put on record.

"We went through a three-hour caucus last night in an effort to hasten the process of individual amendments," Drilon said. "It is not our intention to keep this away from the public. We have been doing this in an effort to hasten the proceedings because, otherwise, it will take us one year to debate on this very contentious measure."

"We can agree on it also in the session but because of the formality of the session, it's easier to arrive at a consensus in informal discussions. But these are all recorded and open to public scrutiny," Drilon said.

Drilon said the senators agreed during the caucus, attended by 17 senators from the administration and the opposition, that there will be no more questions raised on the floor on provisions they had reached consensus on.

But on difficult ones, there will be a voting after explanations are put on record.

Electric cooperatives

Drilon said that during the caucus, they agreed to include fuel to the VAT chain.

"The VAT on power will be voted upon. The no-pass on provision will be voted upon. The VAT on electric cooperatives will depend upon the decision to exempt the power sector or include it in the VAT system. If we include in the VAT system the power sector, the electric cooperatives as a distributor will have to be included in the VAT."

RP 'scolds' US diplomat who compared Mindanao to Afghanistan

From page A1

I said. Read the transcript."

GMA not bothered

President Macapagal-Arroyo was not bothered by Mussomeli's comments as long as his boss in Washington, President George W. Bush, remained satisfied with the Philippine contribution to anti-terrorism.

At a briefing in Malacañang, Ms Arroyo noted that Bush himself, in a speech at the US National Defense Authority, had cited the Philippine role in combating terrorism.

"He (Bush) said, like, the world is safer because of the Philippine success in neutralizing the leaders of terrorist networks, including the JI (Jemaah Islamiyah) and the al-Qaida elements," she replied when asked if she believed that Mindanao would be the next Afghanistan.

Ms Arroyo said "Mussomeli corrected himself so I do not think there is a need to comment on that anymore."

Out of context

After Malacañang criticized him for making "such negative hyperbole," Mussomeli issued a clarification, saying he was taken "a bit out of context."

"The US does not believe that Mindanao is like Afghanistan or that it will be the next Afghanistan. Certain factors are there that need to be addressed, though. We cannot deny that there are members of Jemaah Islamiyah there, being trained to make bombs and launch attacks," Mussomeli said in a statement.

The DFA said the diplomatic note dismissed Mussomeli's statements as "grossly inaccurate, patently unfair, prejudicial and counterproductive to the overall efforts of the Philippine government to fight terrorism and to bring peace and development in Mindanao."

Dishonor

In a press release, the DFA said the diplomat's statements also "dishonor the sacrifices and the memories of the many who have risked and lost their lives to fight terrorism and win the peace in Mindanao."

They also "undermine the cooperation between Philippine government and donor countries, among them the United States, aimed at eliminating terrorism and fostering peace and development in Mindanao," the DFA said.

The department added that the statements "negate the fact that much headway has been achieved by the Philippine government in its peace and development programs throughout the country, particularly in Muslim Mindanao."

Such comments from Mussomeli "are not to be expected from a representative of a close and friendly government and strategic ally."

30-minute meeting

The diplomat arrived at the DFA office in Pasay City at 3:45 p.m. and went to the office of Assistant Secretary for American Affairs Ariel Abadilla. Mussomeli emerged from the meeting about 30 minutes later, carrying the note verbale.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said his instructions to Abadilla were to make sure that Mussomeli "knows that we expect mutual respect and cordiality from representatives of foreign governments and that such officials should become more circumspect in describing the situation of their host government and be sensitive and aware of the impact their statements may make, whether or not such statements are qualified as 'personal views.'"

"We have conveyed, in no uncertain terms, how we feel over how Mr. Mussomeli characterized the situation in Mindanao and how he described our determination and efforts to win the war against terrorism," Romulo said in the DFA statement.

Expression of concern

At the meeting with the US diplomat, Abadilla explained that the DFA had noted the "overall positive tone" of Mussomeli's interview except for some specific statements.

Asked if yesterday's action was tantamount to a diplomatic protest, DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque said "we're not using the word. We're saying that it's an expression of deep concern."

Interviewed on his way out of the DFA, Mussomeli declined to discuss his meeting with Abadilla except to say that they had a "cordial, good, healthy, candid exchange of views" about his controversial interview.

Not a Valentine

Emerging from the meeting carrying a white envelope, he still managed to make light of his situation: "I have a note verbale and I thought it was a Valentine but it isn't."

"I think the Philippine government is within its rights to express its views on any way it deems appropriate," he said.

Mussomeli drew flak from Malacañang and several lawmakers for remarks made in an interview with SBS-TV Australia on April 5. The US Embassy website later carried the transcript.

His comparison of Mindanao with Afghanistan occurred when asked: "Basically, what are the fears of the US here regarding the activities of those groups (referring to Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf) in the Philippines? What are you worried about?"

Long-term threat

Mussomeli replied to the question thus: "Personally, I'm worried that we're not worried enough. I think the real danger here, and the danger that has been here since the mid-'90s, is that we're not focused enough on the threat here. It's not the sort of threat that should be worried about coming here on a day-to-day basis. The threat is more long-term: that Mindanao is such a lawless—certain portions of Mindanao—are so lawless, so porous the borders that you run the risk of it becoming like an Afghanistan situation."

'New Mecca for terrorism'

He gave Mindanao another unflattering label when later asked: "A recent development like the capture of that Palestinian national down in Zamboanga, how significant is that? Do you think that points to increased cooperation between al-Qaida-linked groups and elements of the Abu Sayyaf?"

He answered: "I honestly don't know enough about that specific instance to comment. I would say that, you know, it's hard to say whether the JI links are getting stronger or we're just becoming better at finding them. Maybe in the late '90s, it was just as bad and we just, we're too oblivious, because we were focused on other parts of the world to know. But what we do find is that it seems that the links are stronger, that Mindanao is almost, forgive the poor religious pun, the new 'Mecca' for terrorism."

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Shooting mars Quiapo ...

From page A1

Gulam-Ambiong said that while the group was holding a press conference at around 1 p.m. at the Islamic Center, Macatuna Lucman appeared with three of his men and fired several warning shots in the air.

"Lucman was angry because they thought we did not inform them of our activity," Ambiong said, adding that Hadji Ali Lucman, Hadji Malik-Nanak and Weng Macadato barged into the mosque and started shouting at everyone.

One of the suspects even poked a gun at a cameraman of a television network, according to the NMPOC leader.

Not barangay matter

"The press conference is not a barangay matter, but an activity involving and speaking for all Filipino Muslims," Ambiong said.

Senior Insp. Virgilio Obar said the police recovered four empty shells of a .45-cal. pistol and M-16 rifle at the site. Nobody was hurt.

Obar said charges of indiscriminate firing and alarm and scandal would be filed against the suspects. He also said they wanted to know if the firearms were licensed.

Alimatar Garangan II, Shabab Bangsamoro secretary general and Muslim youth sector representative, also expressed disappointment over the incident.

"We are struggling to come out with a positive image for all Muslims by bridging the gap between Christianity and Islam, and now this incident," he said.

The Muslim leaders held the press conference to condemn Mussomeli who had earlier branded Mindanao as the next Afghanistan. *With a report from Jean Marionne Bermudez*

Taxmen cometh for ...

From page A1

items are those with a base price of P50,000—high grade watches, television sets and chandeliers.

Also on the list are carpets made of wool, fine animal hair and other expensive textiles, whirlpool bathtubs, video games with TV receivers, golf and polo sets and their requisites, yachts, helicopters and private planes.

The committee, however, did not estimate the revenues to be generated by the measure although more and more showbiz personalities and well-heeled people are now themselves availing of liposuction and other surgeries to enhance their faces and figures.

Status symbol

"They could be based on presumptive volume," said Lapus, explaining the the committee had no conclusive data on the cosmetic operations and imported luxury items.

Rep. Abraham Kahlil Mitra (LP, Palawan), who authored the measure along with Rep. Catalino Figueroa (KNP, Western Visayas), said cosmetic surgery (such as liposuction, breast augmentation and facelifts) had become a "status symbol in the country."

"There is no doubt about that," said Mitra, stressing that "in parties, slimmer hips and whiter skin are being bragged about than (wearing) precious stones."

J-Lo butt

"Before we ask a farmer to pay a higher tax on his favorite gin, shouldn't we first remove the tax-free (status) of surgical procedures on society matrons who have a J-Lo (singer-actress Jennifer Lopez) butt?" he said.

But both Lapus and Mitra could not say whether the consolidated bill would be calendared for plenary debate during the summer session, which ends on June 10.

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2 Olivarez co-accused left to face suit

By Fran Katigbak

THE ABSENCE of an accused will not affect the prosecution of the rest.

Even if former Parañaque Mayor Pablo Olivarez does not show up for a fifth arraignment, the trial for two of his alleged accomplices will continue, lawyer Roberto S. Makalintal Jr. told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Olivarez, Remedios Malibiran and Camilio Jaro are accused of violating Section 261, Article 22 of the Omnibus Election Code for allegedly engaging in vote buying during the May 2004 elections.

The Parañaque police are on the lookout for the former mayor who has not attended his arraignment.

The arraignments were scheduled for December 2004, February 1, March 9 and April 5. Another is scheduled on April 20.

Judge Fortunito Madrona of Parañaque City Regional Trial Court Branch 274 has twice issued bench warrants for Olivarez but the police have failed to serve them.

"Captain Francisco Villamena, the officer I sent, went to the Olivarez compound three times but was told the former mayor was not home," said city police chief Ronald Estilles. "I even went to the compound myself."

Estilles said they believed that Olivarez was in hiding.

Unconfirmed reports say the former mayor is in Batangas or Laguna, the police official added.

The National Bureau of Investigation and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Division of the Parañaque police have been alerted on the warrants against Olivarez.

"There is no bail involved," said Estilles. "He (Olivarez) only has to present himself before the judge and explain why he was absent."

BACLARAN FIRE ERIK ARAZAS

Residents of a shanty town at the reclamation site in Baclaran, Parañaque City, gather in a wasteland where their houses used to stand. A fire that hit the area yesterday morning killed a 5-year-old girl, destroyed 200 shanties and left 500 families homeless.

LGUs can lead battle vs cyber crime, says exec

By Luige A. del Puerto

IN THE absence of a law against cyber crimes, local governments can pass ordinances shutting down Internet cafés operating as cybersex dens, a senior official of the Philippine transnational crimes office said yesterday.

"(A city or town can immediately) shut down these Internet cafés," said Ambassador Florencio Fianza, chief of the Office of the Special Envoy on Transnational Crime.

"I think it is within the power of local governments," he said.

He added that without a law penalizing cyber crimes and Internet pornography, the closure of cybersex dens "would be good enough."

No local government has passed an ordinance regulating Internet shops, Fianza said.

Authorities helpless

Cybersex dens have mushroomed in Metro Manila and key cities in the country over the last few years, and authorities seem helpless against them.

Cybersex den operators recruit mostly young women using hefty salary packages.

A recent raid on a Las Piñas cybersex den revealed that recruits could earn as much as $2,000 in two weeks.

The cybersex den operators even promised to double the girls' earnings if they brought in $2,500 or more in 15 days.

Cybersex dens, whose clients are mostly foreigners, earn millions monthly, police said.

But Republic Act No. 2928, or the Anti-Trafficking of Persons Act, is weak and not enough to stop cybersex shop operators, said Senior Supt. Rodolfo "Boogie" Mendoza.

"The law is weak in that possession of pornographic materials is not punishable, even if it's clear that these are used for cybersex," said the former official of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

Last October, the police lost its case against Belgian Roland Thys, who operated a cybersex den in Angeles City, Pampanga.

Not enough

But the justice department ruled that mere possession of accessories used in cybersex den operations was not enough to prosecute Thys.

Local governments can help stop cyber crime by passing ordinances that will regulate cyber cafés, Fianza said.

Or this can be done at the issuance of mayor's or business permits, he added.

He noted that local governments can shut down business establishments found violating local laws.

Recently, Pasig City and San Juan revoked the business permits of Internet cafés suspected to be involved in online gambling.

Yesterday, Fianza met with officials of city and municipal leagues to discuss transnational crimes and how they can help in combating them.

Li-Ann de Leon, executive director of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines, said the group supported the move.

"We can pass ordinances, but first we have to educate our members," she said.

The police have identified as cybersex hotspots the cities of Angeles and San Fernando in Pampanga, Las Piñas, and Davao.

At least two dens had been raided in Angeles late last year.

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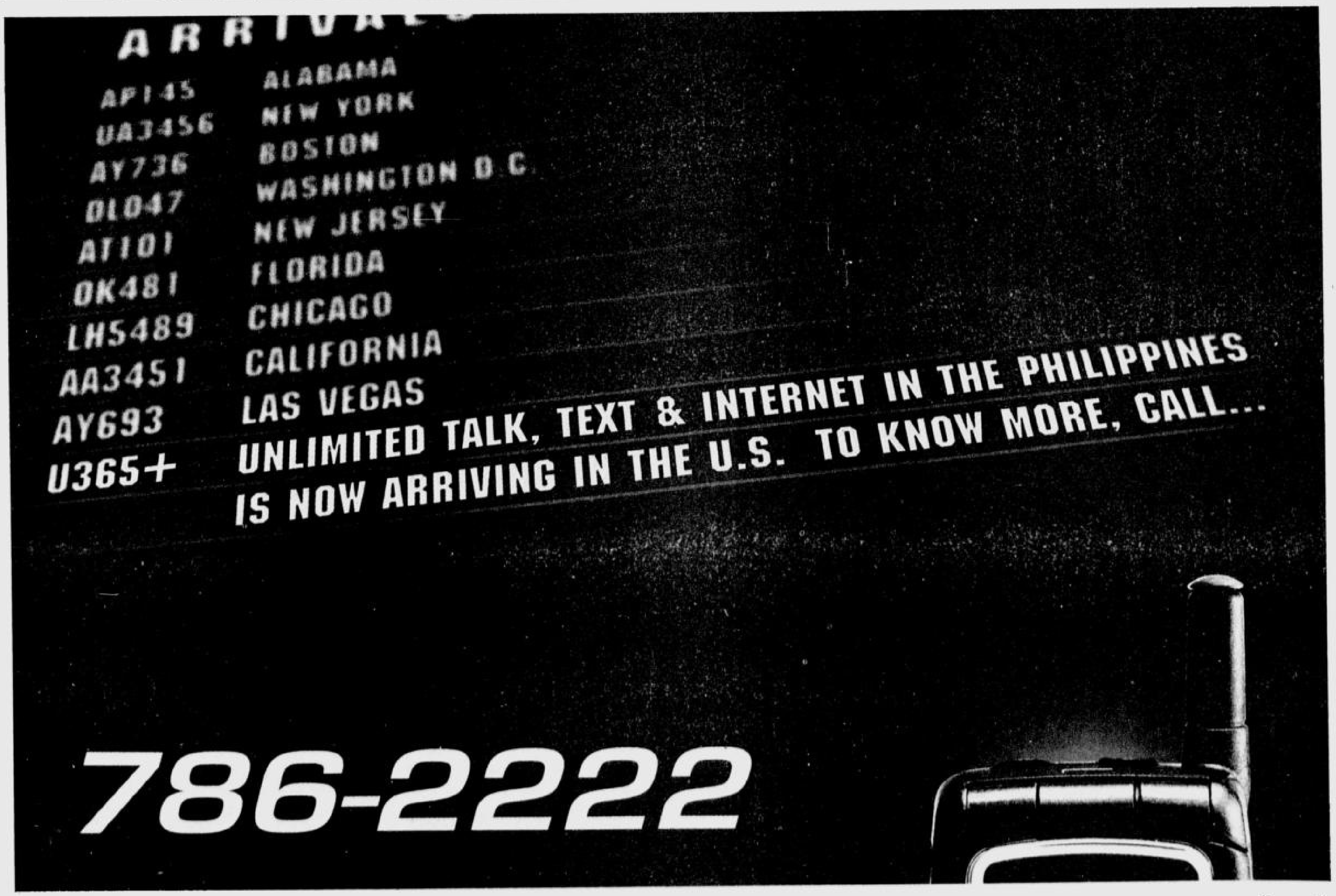

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RP streets unsafe for kids–NGO study

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE COUNTRY'S streets have become too dangerous for children.

Every hour, 11 Filipinos aged 14 and under are killed in road accidents, according to a new study by Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of nongovernment organizations.

Four out of these 11 victims are killed as pedestrians while the rest figure in a host of road accidents as passengers, said Dr. Rafael Consunji, the group's director for Asian operations.

Road accidents

Consunji and his group of researchers projected that around 35,000 Filipino children would be either killed or injured while walking along roads this year.

An estimated 65,000 other kids will suffer either fate due to vehicular accidents, they warned.

"We should regard as unacceptable the possibility of a child getting killed by simply crossing the street," Consunji told reporters yesterday, as he revealed the results of the study.

The problem, however, could be prevented, he said, noting that 18 million Filipino children walk to school every day.

Data for the study was collated from reports by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Philippine National Police, Land Transportation Office, Departments of Health and Public Works, National Center for Transportation Studies, and the Asian Development Bank over the last 12 years.

During this period, Consunji said the country's vehicle volume doubled, while the rate of child deaths related to road mishaps increased by 130 percent.

In 2003 alone, 2,250 children were killed while 93,854 others were wounded. The number of fatalities that year was 291 more than the figures recorded in 2002, according to Safe Kids Worldwide.

The alarming situation pushed the Philippines to the bottom of the standings involving five other countries identified in the study.

Among the six countries, the Philippines registered the highest death rate at 7.8 percent for children aged 14 and below. South Korea was a far second at 5.1 while the United States came in third with 3.4.

New Zealand was fourth with 3.1 percent, Australia fifth with 2.7, and China sixth with 2.2.

High death rate

What was also alarming was that the Philippines had a far higher death rate than China, even if both countries had the same traffic index of one vehicle for every 20 people, Consunji pointed out.

"Of course, we can always argue that China has more space for its vehicles," Consunji said.

"But the fact that we still registered such a high death rate should convince us to move," he added.

The problem facing Filipino children was reflected in a "walkability study" Consunji's group conducted in 24 schools in the cities of Pasay and Parañaque earlier this year.

Of at least 50,000 public school children in these cities, only a fourth of them are accompanied by adults while using the streets, according to the doctor.

Obstructions

There's also a problem with infrastructure.

In Parañaque, 70 percent of the respondents said they could not use the sidewalks because of obstructions like parked vehicles, garbage and holes, the study showed.

Fifty-two percent of them complained there were not enough sidewalks in areas around their schools.

Sixty percent said they had to cross at least two roads to get to school.

"What we really need is a consolidated effort to educate the people, enforce traffic rules, and address the problem by giving our pedestrians good spaces for walking," Consunji said.

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Park caretakers press appeal to stay

By Tarra V. Quismundo

MEMBERS and supporters of the Winner Foundation yesterday reiterated its appeal to the local government of Manila to let them continue the job of being caretakers of the controversial 2.1-hectare Arroceros Forest Park in Manila.

The city government of Manila had been asserting its rights to ownership of the property on Antonio Villegas Street (formerly Arroceros) near the Manila City Hall, saying the property had long been reserved for the construction of a building for the Division of City Schools of Manila (DCS).

"They should not tell us that they are doing this for educational purposes, because the park already is serving such a purpose, one that is not available to students here within two hours away from Manila," said environmental lawyer Ipat Luna, at a press conference in Makati City yesterday.

Luna had referred to the park as an outdoor classroom on the environment, with its 8,000 trees of 61 species, including century-old narra, mahogany, sampaloc and balite, and nesting birds belonging to at least nine species.

Several student tours and painting sessions for artists had already been conducted at the park, a patch of land with a developing forest cover that is easily accessible to Metro Manila-based students.

"What worries me is that the teachers are fighting for their own benefit in exchange for the environment. Are they going to sacrifice the forest for a building? What kind of values are we teaching our children?" said prominent artist Araceli Dans.

City Hall had said the DCS was the rightful owner of the property, as it had bought the lot through an appropriation from its Special Education Fund.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza had explained that centuries-old trees would not be felled, and that the building's design would still make room for a forest park.

TRO averts Caloocan showdown

AN EXPECTED showdown at the Caloocan City Council did not happen yesterday after the court temporarily stopped a son of former Caloocan City Mayor Reynaldo Malonzo from assuming a seat in the body.

In a two-page order, Judge Oscar Barrientos of the Caloocan Regional Trial Court Branch 131 issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) barring Christopher Malonzo from joining the Council.

Christopher was supposed to take over the post that was left vacant when Councilor Eduardo Rosca died in February.

Barrientos granted the 20-day TRO sought by Nora Nubla, vice-chair of the Kapisanan ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) in Caloocan.

The KNP and the local members of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats party are opposing the appointment of Malonzo's son, claiming irregularities in the process.

But the judge, in the resolution dated April 11, also ordered Nubla to post a P500,000 bond to cover damages that might be sustained by Christopher should his appointment prove binding.

The TRO prevented chaos in the council, according to Councilor Henry Cammayo, spokesperson of Lakas councilors opposed to the appointment.

Not barred

Cammayo said Christopher would not be prevented from entering the council hall but would not be allowed to participate in sessions.

"He could watch from the gallery," Cammayo said.

Meanwhile, Rosca's widow, Hilda, and their daughter, Kristen Joy, read an appeal for President Macapagal-Arroyo to reconsider her decision appointing the younger Malonzo as replacement of the councilor.

Hilda and Kristen Joy made the appeal in a press conference yesterday attended by Lakas councilors.

The Roscas said it took them a while to air their appeal because of the pain of their loss and of alleged betrayal by the former mayor.

The widow revealed to media that former Mayor Malonzo, immediately after the interment of Rosca, asked for a copy of his death certificate.

"I trusted him," said Hilda, choking with emotion.

It was too late, she said, when she learned that Malonzo had endorsed Christopher to Speaker Jose de Venecia.

She added that Malonzo did not even give them the courtesy of telling them his decision.

"We feel betrayed. We were the ones who lost a loved one and yet we were the ones taken advantage of," the widow said.

The Lakas councilors have endorsed Kristen Joy as her father's replacement. *Nancy C. Carvajal*

Tourism boost for Marikina

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE (FOOT) ball is now in the court of the Marikina City government.

Preparations for the Southeast Asian Games, which the country will host in December, are off to a promising start in the city that was chosen to host the women's football competition.

"This is an opportunity to promote Marikina City," Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee (Philsoc) Chair Roberto Pagdanganan told the INQUIRER yesterday as the city signed a memorandum of agreement with Philsoc.

Marikina City is the first of several local government units chosen as venues to formally enter into an agreement with the organization for the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

City public information chief Milette Lorenzo said being selected as one of the venues would help boost attempts of its officials to promote sports, tourism and business in the city.

Seven countries are expected to field teams for the women's football competition, where the country is expected to excel, Pagdangan said. The competition will be held at the Marikina Sports Park in December.

Under the agreement, the city government would allow the use of its sports center for free, as well as provide hotel accommodations and shuttle services to athletes and other participants housed in the city.

In exchange, the city is allowed to market the event to local sponsors.

Apart from the Philippines, other participating countries are Thailand, Indonesia, East Timor, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Brunei, Burma (Myanmar) and Singapore.

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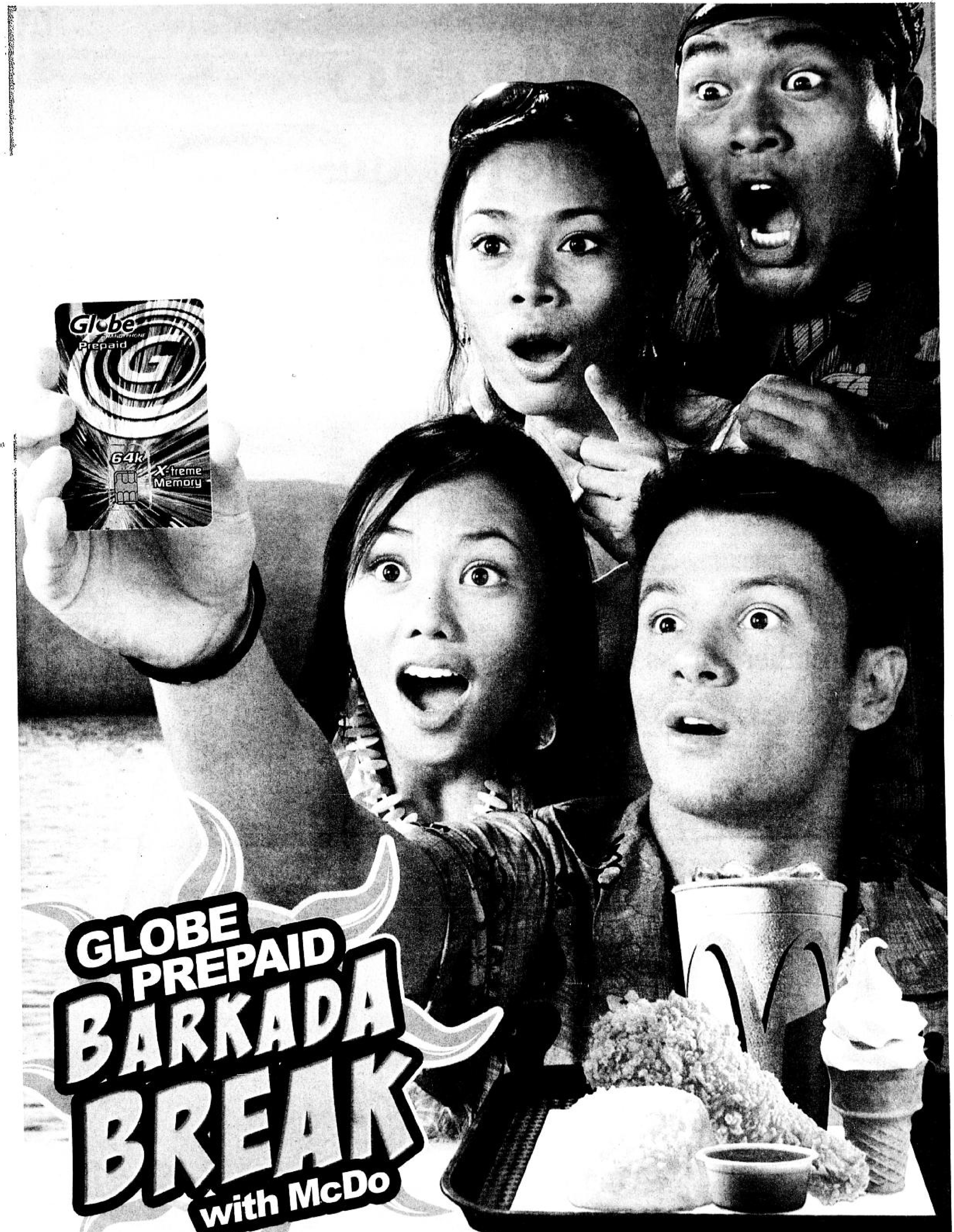

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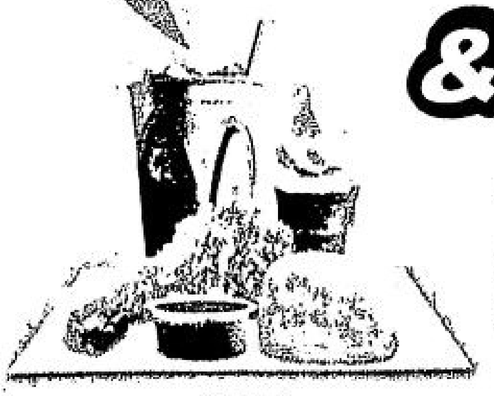

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Ginebra, Shell collide

GAMES TODAY (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:45 p.m.—Purefoods vs SLR
7:35 p.m.—Shell vs Ginebra

BARANGAY GINEBRA tries to stay in front when the Kings battle the Shell Turbochargers today in the 2005 Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

On a three-game roll, the Kings are seeking to post the longest streak in the conference at 7:35 p.m. against the Turbochargers, who are hoping to recover lost ground after bowing to the Red Bull Barako a week ago.

Meanwhile, Sta. Lucia Realty tries to end its woes when the Realtors field a fully recovered Ryan Fletcher against the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs in the 4:45 p.m. opener.

Fletcher, jet lag and all, was still impressive in his debut against the Kings, who won mainly because the local Realtors again groped for form as in their past five outings.

Fletcher finished in double-double figures and the Realtors (1-6) need a similar effort tonight plus a respectable showing from Marlou Aquino and Kenneth Duremdes to revive their sagging spirits.

The TJ Hotdogs are on the same boat as the Realtors, having lost back-to-back games the past week to fall into a tie with Red Bull Barako and Shell at 4-3.

Rookie James Yap had turned in impressive numbers along with Antonio Smith but couldn't stop the TJ Hotdogs from absorbing setbacks against the resurgent Alaska Aces and the San Miguel Beermen.

Ginebra backup center Rommel Adducul will be in the spotlight tonight following his recent announcement that he is interested in playing for Shell.

Ed Ponceja, Adducul's manager, said his ward had already told Kings coach Siot Tanquingcen he wants to move out of the shadow of Ginebra's Eric Menk. *June Navarro*

Tañamor enters King's Cup finals

FILIPINO Harry Tañamor beat Thai Arnon Pangleelad Monday night to barge into the light flyweight final bout of the 26th King's Cup International Boxing Championships in Bangkok, Thailand.

The 26-year-old Tañamor, the returning Armyman from Zamboanga City and the lone survivor of the six-man RP squad in this 18-team, 15-nation tournament, posted a 30-22 victory over Pangleelad, a member of Thailand Team A.

Tañamor, bronze medalist in the 2003 World Championships and the lone boxing medalist in the 2003 Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam, goes for the gold medal on Tuesday when he battles Ramdhani Kamal of Indonesia in the finals of this world-ranking tournament which lured 89 boxers.

"Harry's victory more than made up for the sorry losses absorbed by his teammates in this tough tournament which lured the best boxers from the former members of the USSR as well as Asian and Middle East countries," said Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines president Manny Lopez.

"He (Tañamor) is ready for the Southeast Asian Games. He is peaking in time and showed that he is ready to fight again after seven months of hibernation," Lopez added, pointing at the self-imposed leave of absence by Tañamor after his botched campaign in the Athens Olympics last year.

Tanamor dictated the tempo of the four-round match right from the start. Battling Pangleelad toe-to-toe in the first two rounds, Tanamor resorted to a hit-and-run tactic in the third round which proved to be more effective.

By the end of the third, Tañamor was way ahead, 23-14. The Filipino then effectively counter-punched in the fourth round.

PSC allocates P40M for China-bound athletes

By Musong Castillo

THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission will allocate another P40 million for the expenses of 234 athletes and 39 coaches that will go to China for training and seminars.

The amount will be used to pay for the delegation's board and lodging as it goes to separate parts of the mainland starting this month in preparation for the Manila Southeast Asian Games in November.

First Gentleman Mike Arroyo and PSC officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez recently returned from China where a supplemental memorandum of agreement was formalized and signed.

Liu Peng, minister of the general administration of sports of China, and Ramirez signed the agreement, which focused on strengthening and encouraging the cooperation of both countries in the field of sports.

A total of 14 sports, with football sending the biggest number of athletes of 25 men and 25 women and a total of 10 coaches, will training in the country that has dominated Asian sports.

Athletics, canoe/kayak, fencing, gymnastics, rowing, swimming, diving, table tennis, beach and indoor volleyball, weightlifting, wrestling and wushu are also availing of the program.

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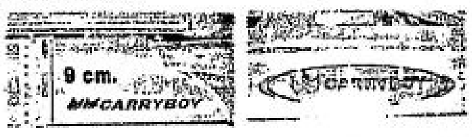

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Orlando C. Akiatan, Bukidnon
Samsung HD748 DVD Player
Henry Buligon, Cal. City
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Richard Relacion, Bulacan
1 Carton of 1L Petron Touring
Jose Glenis Solven Jr., Isabela
1 Carton of 1L Petron Touring
Sophia P. Gorromeo, Pasay City
1 Carton of 1L Petron REV-X
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1 Carton of 1L Petron REV-X

Draw Date : March 17, 2005
Ivy Suzette Guclatal, Quezon
Samsung E800 Cellphone
Steven Pontaoy, Iloilo
Samsung V50 Digital Camera
Michael Agbisit, Isabela
Samsung HD 748 DVD Player
Lecson Wali, Abra
Magic Sing
Maricel R. de Vera, La Union
1 Carton of 1L Petron Touring
Rodolfo Alzona, Laguna
1 Carton of 1L Petron Touring
Rhoderick Esguerra, Nueva Ecija
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Cuevas, Bernaldo enter Epson Cup 2 semifinals

FAVORITES Alex Cuevas and Renel Bernaldo advanced to the semifinals of the Epson Cup 2 badminton championship recently at the Olympic Badminton Club in Libis, Quezon City.

Cuevas, the non-ranking men's national champion, and Bernaldo slipped past the duo of Gener Godoy and Alex Bartolay, 15-8, 13-15, in the Class A men's doubles division.

Gabby Nepomuceno and Jeff Tablante, and the Jere Fregil-Anthony Samonte pair also advanced with Godoy and Bartolay, who qualified due to a higher aggregate score.

In the elite ladies doubles, Melody Villaceran and Jojo Hipolito topped the Class A division.

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Montaña licks Magnolia

By Jasmine W. Payo

SEASONED guard Alex Compton shot 18 points as Montaña Pawnshop surprisingly posted an easy 64-55 victory over Magnolia Ice Cream to grab the solo lead in the PBL Unity Cup yesterday at the FEU Gym.

But Montaña's third straight victory was overshadowed by Harbour Centre earlier when Mac Cardona fired a three-pointer with one-tenth of a second remaining to lift the rookie team past Toyota Otis-Letran, 75-73.

The Portmasters had only 2.7 seconds left to salvage the game when Cardona, who delivered another strong performance with 21 points, shot the winning basket at the left flank off an inbound pass from point guard L.A. Tenorio.

"We got lucky," said coach Tonichi Yturri after Harbour Centre registered its second straight win in three games. "We have to learn to play smart. The boys have to learn how to finish games."

Magnolia and Toyota Otis saw their records drop to 1-2.

Harbour Centre held a 16-point margin in the second quarter, 34-18, until Dennis Daa, who finished with a game-high 27 points, took over to rally the Knights within 39-31 at halftime.

It was also Daa, who gave Toyota Otis what looked like a decisive 73-72 lead with 15 seconds left in the game, until Cardona, the pro-bound star from La Salle, struck with the winning trey.

Cardona, Tenorio and Ronjay Enrile were slapped with unsportsmanlike fouls as tempers flared. Jerwin Gaco was ejected in the third quarter, while Chad Alonzo, Ron Capati, Robert Sanz and Mark Andaya absorbed technical fouls.

The scores:

First game

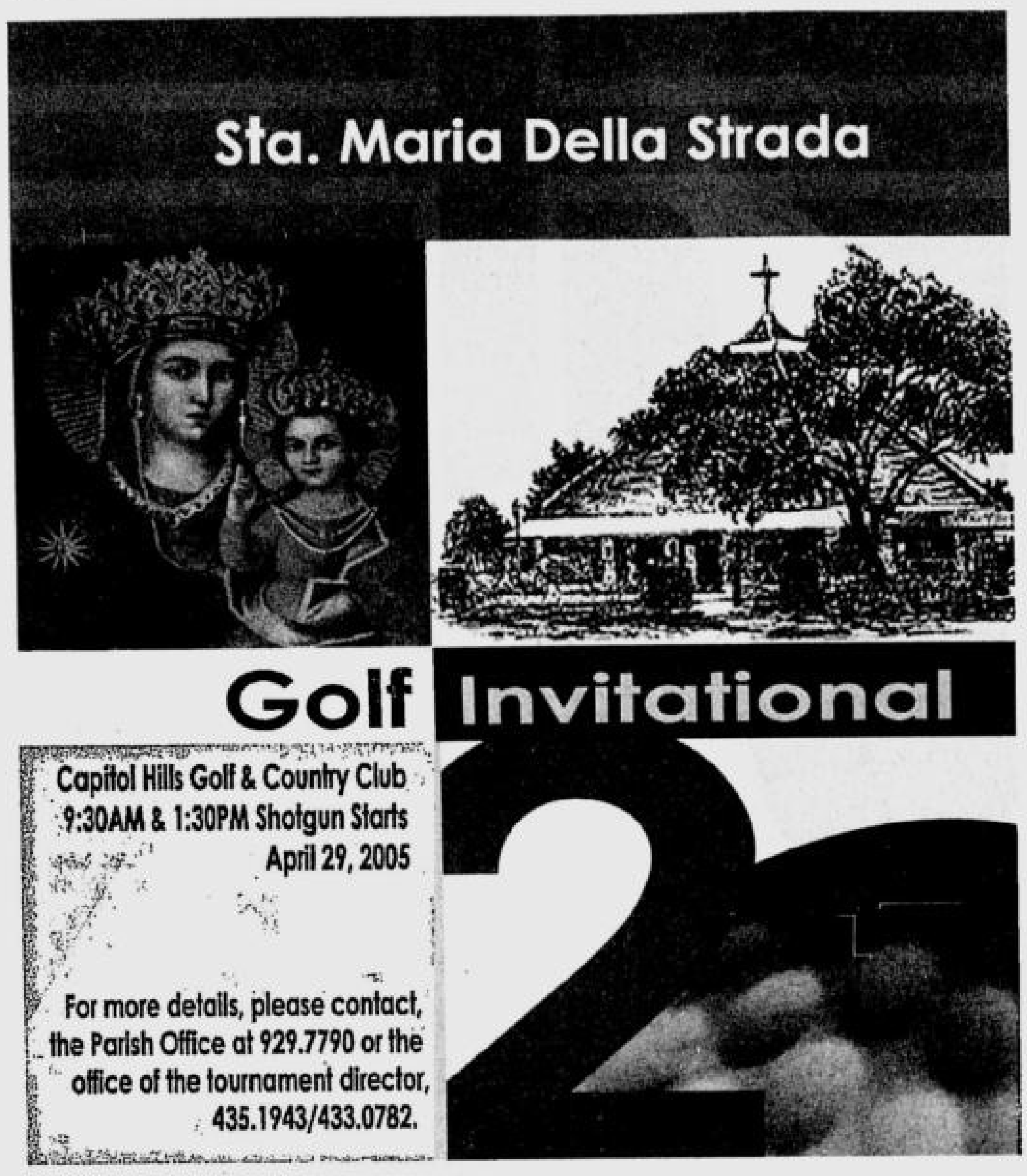
HARBOUR CENTRE 75—Cardona 21, Masina 13, Espinas 10, Bugia 9, Sanz 8, Membrere 3, Castro 3, Tenorio 2, Mendoza 2, Gaco 2, Gatumbato 2, Buenafe 0.

TOYOTA OTIS 73—Daa 27, Macapagal 9, Oreta 7, Capati 6, Tagupa 5, Enrile 4, Larong 4, Andaya 4, Coronel 3, Rodriguez 2, Piñera 2, Alonzo 0, Tajonera 0.

Quarters: 16-12, 39-31, 59-52, 75-73.

MITCH MAURICIO

HARBOR Centre's Mark Cardona (right) tries to slip past Toyoto Otis' Emerson Oreta.



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the Parish Office at 929.7790 or the
office of the tournament director,
435.1943/433.0782.

T-Mac returning for Streetball

GUESS who is coming back to the Philippines.

To highlight the adidas Streetball Challenge's 10th year, the shoe and sports apparel manufacturer is bringing back Houston Rockets superstar Tracy McGrady as a special guest in the country's hosting of the Asian finals of the leading playground basketball event.

McGrady had visited the Philippines during the 2000 finals here. "His coming trip here is very meaningful to us because it was Mr. McGrady himself who chose the Philippines as one of only two countries he'd like to visit to promote adidas," said John Alonte, president and managing director of adidas. "Apparently, he has good memories of his stay here five years ago."

The summer tournament known as basketball's extreme, half-court, street version was launched in the PSA Sports Forum yesterday. Joining Alonte were adidas sports marketing manager Goody Custodio, tournament director Noel Ascue and Carmina Velayo, brand manager of Globe gentext.

adidas is also bringing in endorsers Joe Smith of the Milwaukee Bucks and the Portland Trail Blazers high school phenom Sebastian Telfair.

"We're making it more exciting this time as we celebrate our 10th year," Custodio said. "We've got great prizes for the winners aside from the chance to represent the Philippines to the Asian finals."

Around 120 teams from the National Capital Region are seeing action in the meet's kickoff leg on April 16-17 at the SM Megamall Open Carpark C.

The event backed by McDonald's, Cherifer Multivitamins, Snickers chocolate bar, Coppertone, adidas fragrance and body care, Blue Angel alcohol, Milo, Powerade, Viva Mineral Water, adidas eyewear and Yehey.com also features pocket tourneys for the seniors (16-19) and girls (19-and below) divisions.

Aveo, Sentra prize for aces

A CHEVROLET Aveo and a Nissan Sentra are up for grabs as hole-in-one prizes in the 6th Don Celso Tuason & Valley Founders Memorial Cup, the member-guest tournament of the Valley Golf and Country Club in Antipolo, starting tomorrow.

The Aveo, courtesy of GM Autoworld in cooperation with Malayan Insurance, will be staked for an ace on the 8th and 12th hole while the Sentra, donated by Nissan Commonwealth, is offered on the 18th of the South course. Smart Communications is the presenter of the event with Arms Corp. and Pacsports as major sponsors.

Valley Golf & Country Club, Inc.

TUASON CUP: (From left Dennis Huang, Mar Marron, Joey Salindong, SMART Marketing's Rep Mark Pineda, Valley president Joe Feliciano, Bolo Tuason, tournament chair Bobon Topacio, Valley GM Bong Olizon, Tony Dela Cruz of ARMSCOR and Valley S&G chair Dr. Jun OLiveros after hitting the ceremonial ball of the 6th Don Celso Tuason and Valley Founders Cup.

Lim and Nathanielsz, true and false

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

(EARLY START: It was Palawan Gov. Joel de los Reyes, not Joey as misspelled here last time, who helped North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol lay the groundwork for the Governors' National Amateur Boxing Circuit, which was formally launched at the PSA Forum at the Manila Pavilion yesterday. The energetic governor of Palawan has confided that his province is in the process of identifying promising young athletes who will be raised, trained and supported from childhood all the way to their full fruition.)

***

GRAHAM Lim, found to be a fake Filipino "after a thorough and lengthy investigation," has all the right to use a borrowed nationality.

However, Lim had to be put in his proper place after he was found to have stolen his identity.

Lim, who uses a Filipino passport, was found to be a Chinese through and through.

Nothing wrong with that; the Chinese, after all, are among the world's more adorable people.

In fact, Lim, as he had promptly threatened, has the right to appeal.

He will most likely turn to his trusted benefactor, the unsinkable Go Teng Kok, who could use his strong connections in the Philippine Olympic Committee, whose head could then turn to Malacañang.

The Lim case looms as another test case for the President.

***

This late, Malacañang must start strictly evaluating the Lim case.

For example, authorities should study the cases of oppression filed by many Filipino basketball referees whom Lim had deprived of their means of livelihood.

Authorities should also determine how many times Lim had used fake papers in order to travel abroad as a Filipino.

But what should figure prominently in the evaluation is the manner Lim has been flaunting his power as sec-gen of the Basketball Association of the Philippines.

One unforgivable sin was his having fielded a scrub school team to represent the Philippines in a man-size Fide-sanctioned international tournament in Taipei, where the RP flag predictably got kicked around like trash.

There are many other Lim infractions that should be brought out.

But if he, say, gets the passing grade from Malacañang after the True Graham Lim has been presented, the ruling should also confirm what kind of fickle hands rule our life as a nation.

***

This other case has nothing to do with questionable citizenship, but with something deeper.

For one, our former boss in the old dzHP, Ronnie Nathanielsz, had been lent Filipino citizenship by his idol, Ferdinand Marcos.

Nathanielsz is always there to swear to high heavens he's ready to die for the Philippines.

That's easy to believe.

We've worked with Nathanielsz, a former Sri Lankan, and we can attest how much deeper he has learned to love his borrowed nation.

***

This other case has something to do with sincerity.

Why? Because recent happenings after Manny Pacquiao's failed bid at immortality in his fight against the great Erik Morales have made us wonder about Nathanieslz's assumed patriotism.

Nathanielsz, for the record, has been doggedly defending his dear friend Murad Muhammad against allegations that the talkative American promoter has stolen Pacquiao's rightful share in the pay-per-view proceeds of the Morales fight last month.

Nathanielsz has brilliantly presented the Murad case and his detailed defense could qualify him to take a lawyers' board exam in the United States.

But, hey, Nathanielsz could also turn hysterical and lose focus once put on the defensive.

He could insensitively be too smart.

For example, in insisting that it was Morales who had lured practically the entire pay-per-view horde in the fight against Pacquiao, Nathanielsz evidently lost hold of the handle.

***

To defend Murad's right to take away what Pacquiao has earned with blood and sweat from the pay-per-view proceeds, Nathanielsz called Filipinos an insignificant quantity in the US.

Yes, Nathanielsz has belittled Filipino presence in the United States to justify what Murad had perceived to be his right to take Pacquiao's PPV share.

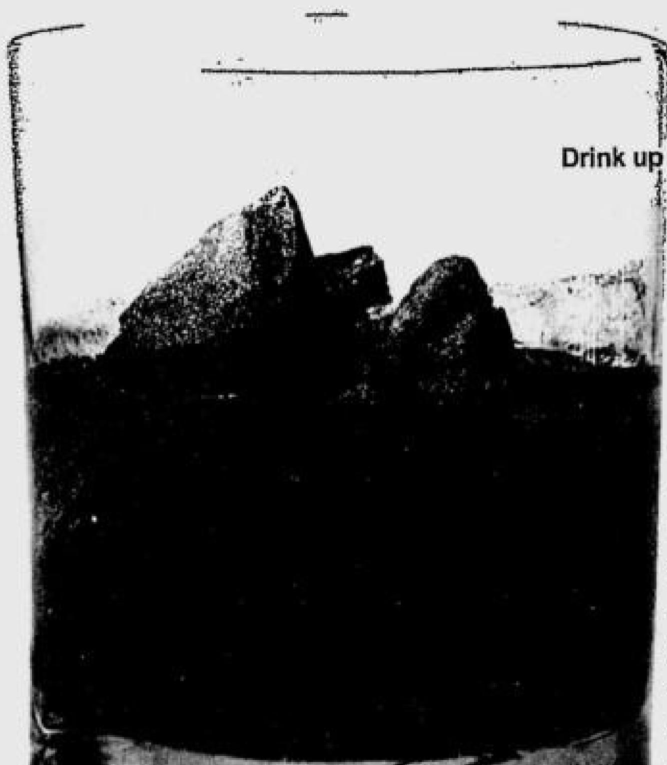
Here's part of that incredible lecture Nathanielsz has written in his column in the Manila Standard Today on Saturday:

"Would Morales' handlers settle for parity with Pacquiao when Morales had done 10 previous successful PPV fights and Pacquiao none? ...Besides, the Hispanics were known PPV supporters of Morales and the Filipinos in the US were an unknown quantity. Does this make any sense to you?"

Of course, that makes a lot of nonsense.

But not to a fickle patriot who could ride on falsehood to uphold his loyalty to a heartless cause.

Marcos himself would've disowned this stranger he had anointed as Pinoy.



Drink up or speak up. Our continued reliance on imported fossil fuels like coal and oil for energy is one of the largest reasons behind problems like global warming, air pollution, the rise in respiratory ailments, and the worsening condition of our water supplies. This dependence also leaves us economically vulnerable to the spiralling cost of coal and oil in the world market. And things will only get murkier unless we reduce our use of coal and oil and push for the increased use of renewable energy sources like geothermal, wind, biomass, hydro, and solar. Speak up and let the government know you want clean energy. Text WWF YES <Your Name> to 2366 for Globe (P2.50/text) or log on to www.powerswitch.org.ph/vote. Act now and help get the Renewable Energy Bill passed into law. Maybe then, the future won't be such a hard thing to swallow.

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Gallego rules Japan 9-Ball, bags P350,000

RAMIL "Bebeng" Gallego edged Antonio "Nickoy" Lining, 9-8, in an All-Filipino finals Monday night to rule the Japan 9-Ball Open in Tokyo.

Gallego, from Bacolod City, reached the championship match by ousting Japanese ace Sashi Yamamoto, 9-7, conqueror of Dennis "Surigao" Orcullo, 9-7, in the quarterfinals.

Lining, on the other hand, downed Hisashi Kusaco, 9-5, in the other semifinal duel.

The win earned Gallego the top purse equivalent to P350,000 while Lining pocketed P175,000.

Gallego acknowledged the support of billiards patron Putch Puyat and Ernie Fajardo, the president of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines, to the members of the national pool.

Fajardo, on the other hand, said the strong performances of the country's top cue artists boost their chances in the Southeast Asian Games this November.

The win came on the heels of a recent victory by Francisco (Django) Bustamante in Bali, Indonesia.

Gandy Valle and Efren (Bata) Reyes have earlier captured the first two legs of the San Miguel Beer Asian Billiards Tour. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Search for Olympic gold gets boost from RP govs

THE COUNTRY'S search for its first Olympic gold as far as boxing is concerned is no longer the sole responsibility of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines.

In a bold, unprecedented move, the Governor's National Amateur Boxing Circuit (GNABC) was launched yesterday by the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP) in its own bid to help the country achieve the ultimate goal in amateur sports competition.

Gov. Manny Piñol of North Cotabato, who heads the Mindanao League of Governors, made an audio-visual presentation of the program during yesterday's PSA forum at the Manila Pavilion.

The program starts with a training program for coaches from the grassroots, a nationwide search for pure boxing talents and the hiring of the best possible amateur coach. It will be based in Davao and has drawn the support of Tony Aldeguer, a promoter based in Cebu.

Once the GNABC has formed a pool of boxers, they will be made to join the eliminations conducted by ABAB for the right to become members of the RP team. Piñol said he expects the boxers to join the next year's Qatar Asian Games.

Piñol recently visited Cuba and announced the hiring of top-notch Cuban coach Honorato Espinosa to help the program.

"But I would like to stress that this program was created in support of ABAP under its president Manny Lopez and which is the national boxing association," said Pinol.

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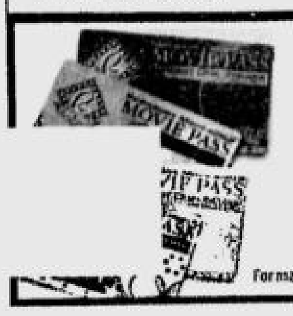

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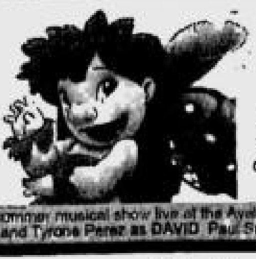

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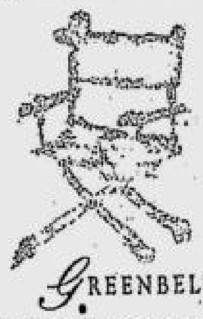

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Boracay hosts Ultimate beach

THE ULTIMATE beach tournament has found the ultimate venue.

Boracay island will serve as the backdrop for 15 teams from all over Europe and Asia vying for the title in the Cali Boracay Fever 2005 Beach Ultimate tournament.

"Boracay is the best place to have a beach tournament," said Donald Egbuji, project manager of the tournament. "It's the perfect venue to accommodate the sport that requires the skills and stamina needed in 'Ultimate.'"

Thirteen teams have already confirmed their participation, including squads from Europe, Korea, Bangkok and Hong Kong.

Cali, the non-alcoholic, sparkling, fruit-flavored drink, is sponsoring the tournament, now on its third year.

Defending champion Boracay Dragons seek a second straight title.

Ultimate is a sport that puts premium on stamina, speed, precision, athleticism and agility. The non-traditional structure and rules of the game help boost its popularity among players of all ages. In Ultimate, players pass the disc to each other, until it reaches the end zone of the playing area.

A player holding the disc has only 6 seconds to pass it to a teammate or his team loses possession. Interceptions can only occur when the disc is in play.

Ultimate is completely different from Frisbee, according to Egbuji.

"It's a common misconception," he said. "Ultimate is the actual disc sport, while Frisbee is the brand name of the disc used in the sport."

Pistons clinch division

CHICAGO—Chauncey Billups scored 28 points, including the game-winning basket with 8.2 seconds left, to help the Detroit Pistons clinch the Central Division with a 85-84 overtime victory over the Chicago Bulls on Monday.

Billups scored seven points in the extra session to lead a Pistons comeback after Chicago scored the first eight points. Detroit scored 12 of the final 15 points to escape with the victory.

"That was a playoff game," Billups said. "They came to play. We did too. People got their money's worth."

The Pistons' division title gives them the No. 2 seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs. They've won seven straight and handed the Bulls just their second loss in 14 games.

"It starts there. When you're on an elite team, that's where you start at. You want to control your own division," Billups said.

Kirk Hinrich scored 15 points to lead the Bulls, who guaranteed themselves a playoff berth on Saturday.

In Dallas, Josh Howard scored 23 points and Keith Van Horn added 14 to lead the Mavericks to a 110-89 rout of Memphis and spoil the Grizzlies' first chance to clinch a playoff spot.

In Denver, Carmelo Anthony scored 11 of his 32 points during a key third-quarter run and Andre Miller had 16 assists to help the Nuggets down the Golden State Warriors, 122-106, and clinch consecutive playoff appearances for the first time in a decade.

In Toronto, Reggie Miller scored 19 points to pass Jerry West for 12th on the all-time scoring list and lead the Indiana Pacers past the Raptors, 94-90.

Miller has 25,201 points, nine more than the man on the NBA logo. *AP*

OTHER RESULTS: Washington 119, Milwaukee 112; Cleveland 114, Orlando 106; Charlotte 110, Atlanta 105, OT; Houston 90, Seattle 78; Phoenix 108, LA Lakers 97

Lim slams BI

GRAHAM LIM, the embattled secretary general of the Basketball Association of the Philippines, will seek reconsideration of what his lawyer said was an "unjust deportation order."

Lawyer Bonifacio Alentajan called the order by the Bureau of Immigration the other day as "highly conjectural and inconclusive," saying it "smacks of arbitrariness and gross denial of the due process of law."

Lim noted there was no hearing on the case, he was not given the chance for rebuttal, and was not given due process before the order was issued.

SPORTSWATCH

Menor picks Archers

SAN BEDA high school standout Rogemar Menor will spend his college varsity years with the De La Salle University Green Archers, beefing up a squad that has recently lost top scorer Mark Cardona. The 18-year-old Menor, choosing between San Beda and La Salle, picked the Archers over the Lions after a lengthy talk with his parents. Menor's transfer should cushion the departure of Cardona, who opted to forego his last year of eligibility to plunge into the pro ranks.

Adamson new UAAP host

THE UNIVERSITY Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) turnover ceremony takes place at noon today at the Manila Polo Club. Danny Jose, De La Salle's athletic director and president of Season 67, formally turns over the hosting chores to Fr. Maximo Rendon and Dr. Ricardo Matibag of Adamson, general host of Season 68 of school year 2005-2006.

Danao stuns Kiamco

UNKNOWN Troy Danao stunned Warren Kiamco, 9-5, in the 2005 Billiard and Snooker Congress of the Philippines (BSCP) qualifying tournament yesterday at the Bowling Inn. Also advancing were Lee Vann Corteza, Rodolfo Luat, Romeo Villanueva, Benjie Guevarra, Adgie Geronimo, Christopher Bombita and Boyet Del Rosario. The top two finishers in the event backed by Puyat Sports will join Bata Reyes, Django Bustamante and Gandy Valle in the Taiwan leg of the SMB Asian 9-ball Tour on April 29 to May 2. ***Marlon Bernardino, contributor***

Pastor, Coseteng rule races

ROSARIO, Batangas—Jody Coseteng of Caltex-SMB Strong Ice and Don Pastor shared top honors in the National Touring Car Championship kickoff at the Batangas Racing Circuit. Pastor struck midway in the 12-lap race to wrest the pole for good in this event sanctioned by the Automobile Association of the Philippines and sponsored by Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Toyota Motors Phils., Norkis Yamaha, Kilton Motors, Denso, MOF Company and Petron, and also supported by Yokohama and Celltron Marketing Co. Coseteng proved tougher in the afternoon race, warding off the challenge of Enzo Pastor who stuck close in the early goings.

Gonzales drops norm bid

FILIPINO International Master Jayson Gonzales dropped his penultimate round match against No. 22 GM Alexander Areshchenko (ELO 2595) of Ukraine and, in the process, lost his chance of getting his second Grandmaster norm Monday night in the 7th Dubai Chess Culture Club in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Gonzales surrendered after 55 moves of Gruenfeld Defense and remained at 4.5, leaving him no chance of reaching the needed 6.0 points for him to get a norm. It also pulled him into a share of 44th to 64th spots with compatriot GM Nelson Mariano II, who halved the point with Negi Parimarjan of India. ***Marlon Bernardino, contributor***

Filcobra 2nd elims on

THE SECOND elimination round of the Filcobra Grand 5-Cock Derby blasts off at 7 p.m. bannering tonight at the Roligon Mega Cockpit. All qualifiers will face one another during the championship on Saturday, April 16. Meanwhile, smalltime cockers and breeders can still join the last day of eliminations of the Ratratan 4-Cock Derby on April 23. For inquiries, call 8332275 and 8331638.

Antonio routs rivals

PATRICK Antonio routed opponents to emerge champion in the Invitational 5—Cock Derby held April 9 at Bacolor Cockpit in Pampanga. Antonio bagged his seventh derby championship so far for 2005. Boy de Roca was declared co-champion. Meanwhile, Antonio, founder of Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP), announced the staging of the GCAP 7-Cock Derby at Las Piñas Coliseum on April 18 and 20.

RACING TIPS

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Race 3—1. Sutter's Wealth 2. Brutus 3. Shining Speed 4. Tactical Move
Race 4—1. Dow Jones 2. Gold Pyramid 3. Candy's Angel 4. Sweet Alyssa 5. Iron Will
Race 5—1. Gonfalon Story 2. Great Tower 3. Candon's Pride/Princess Sarah
Race 6—1. Close Account 2. Society Girl/Express Strike 3. Something Silver 4. Play it Again
Race 7—1. Money for Rap/Secret 2. Air Force One 3. Savvy Lad 4. Bella Firenze
Race 8—1. She Jinsky 2. Queen of Gala 3. Tiger Winnie 4. Lady Be Gold 5. Golden Africa 6. Jonny Lou

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sm city fairview
1 THE WEDDING DATE
2 BOOGEYMAN
3 CLOSER
4 THE PACIFIER
5 HIDE AND SEEK
6 FINDING NEVERLAND
7 SAMARA: RING 2
8 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
9 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
10 LOVE ME IF YOU DARE
11 SAHARA
12 PILUKANG ITIM

sm city north edsa
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
5 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
6 FINDING NEVERLAND
7 SAHARA
8 SAMARA: RING 2

sm city manila
1 THE WEDDING DATE
2 CLOSER
3 FINDING NEVERLAND
4 THE PACIFIER
5 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
6 SAHARA
7 PILUKANG ITIM
8 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
9 SAMARA: RING 2
10 BOOGEY MAN
11 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
12 HIDE AND SEEK

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1 SAMARA: RING 2
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3 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
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6 PILUKANG ITIM
7 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
8 SAHARA
9 THE WEDDING DATE
10 THE PACIFIER

sm city southmall
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 SAHARA
4 FINDING NEVERLAND
5 PILUKANG ITIM
6 THE WEDDING DATE
7 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
8 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
9 THE PACIFIER
10 SAMARA: RING 2

sm city bicutan
1 SAHARA
2 THE WEDDING DATE
3 SAMARA: RING 2
4 ONG BAK: THA THAI WARRIOR

sm cinema tutuban
1 RESERVED
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4 RESERVED

sm supercenter sucat
1 SAHARA
2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
4 THE WEDDING DATE

LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 HOSTAGE
4 CLOSER
5 BOOGEYMAN
6 THE PACIFIER

sm city baguio
1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 THE PACIFIER

sm city batangas
1 FINDING NEVERLAND
2 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
3 THE PACIFIER
4 HIDE AND SEEK

sm city dasmariñas
1 SAMARA: RING 2
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 BE COOL

sm city bacoor
1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 SAMARA: RING 2
5 SAHARA
6 THE PACIFIER
7 THE WEDDING DATE
8 MS. CONGENIALITY 2

sm city marilao
1 FINDING NEVERLAND
2 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
3 THE PACIFIER
4 BE COOL

sm city lucena
1 HOSTAGE
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 FINAL CUT
4 HIDE AND SEEK

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

sm city cebu
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 SAMARA: RING 2
4 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
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6 HITCH
7 THE PACIFIER
8 SAHARA

sm city iloilo
1 CONFIDENCE
2 RESERVED
3 BE COOL
4 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
5 CLOSER
6 HOSTAGE
7 RESERVED
8 ALONE IN THE DARK

sm city davao
1 SAHARA
2 THE PACIFIER
3 BE COOL
4 SON OF THE MASK 2
5 HITCH
6 CONFIDENCE

sm city cagayan de oro
1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 HOSTAGE
3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
4 CLOSER

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'Sahara' is US favorite this week

LOS ANGELES—Matthew McConaughey's "Sahara" heated up the weekend box office, with the action flick set in the African desert debuting at the top with $18.5 million.

Audiences gave a cooler reception to "Fever Pitch," the weekend's other new wide release. The Drew Barrymore and Jimmy Fallon baseball romance opened in third place with a so-so $13 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

The previous weekend's No. 1 movie, "Sin City," slipped to second place with $14.1 million, lifting its 10-day total to $50.7 million.

In limited release, Stephen Chow's raucous action comedy "Kung Fu Hustle" had a big opening with $293,025 in seven theaters, averaging a whopping $41,861 per cinema.

Already a hit in Asia, "Kung Fu Hustle" features writer-director Chow as a two-bit crook in pre-revolution China whose antics land him in the middle of a showdown between mobsters and martial-arts heroes. The movie expands to nationwide release April 22.

Hollywood's box-office slump continued as overall revenues remained down for the seventh-straight weekend. The top 12 movies took in $80.3 million, off 18 percent from the same weekend last year.

"Sahara," adapted from Clive Cussler's adventure novel, stars McConaughey, Penelope Cruz and Steve Zahn as adventurers who turn up a long-lost Civil War vessel in the desert and try to stop a plague spreading through Africa.

Distributor Paramount had expected the movie to debut in the $15 million range, said Wayne Lewellen, head of distribution.

"This is a good, solid opening for this film," Lewellen said. "It played well particularly in the middle of the country, which always bodes well for it holding up."

"Fever Pitch," directed by the Farrelly brothers from Nick Hornby's memoir about his sports obsession, stars Barrymore as a career woman who stumbles into a relationship with a man whose world revolves around the Boston Red Sox.

"It may have alienated guys with too much romance, and it may have alienated women with too much baseball," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations.

But women made up 58 percent of the audience for "Fever Pitch." That may bode well for the movie's long-term prospects, since films appealing to women often have a longer shelf life than movies aimed at men.

"These romantic comedies tend to leg out. They play on and on," said Bruce Snyder, head of distribution for 20th Century Fox, which released "Fever Pitch."

The top 10 for Friday through Sunday at North American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations:

1) "Sahara," $18.5M
2) "Sin City," $14.1M
3) "Fever Pitch," $13M
4) (tie) "Beauty Shop," $7.1M
4) (tie) "Guess Who," $7.1M
6) "Robots," $4.65M
7) "Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous," $4.1M
8) "The Pacifier," $3M
9) "The Ring 2," $2.9M
10) "The Upside of Anger," $2.6M

AP

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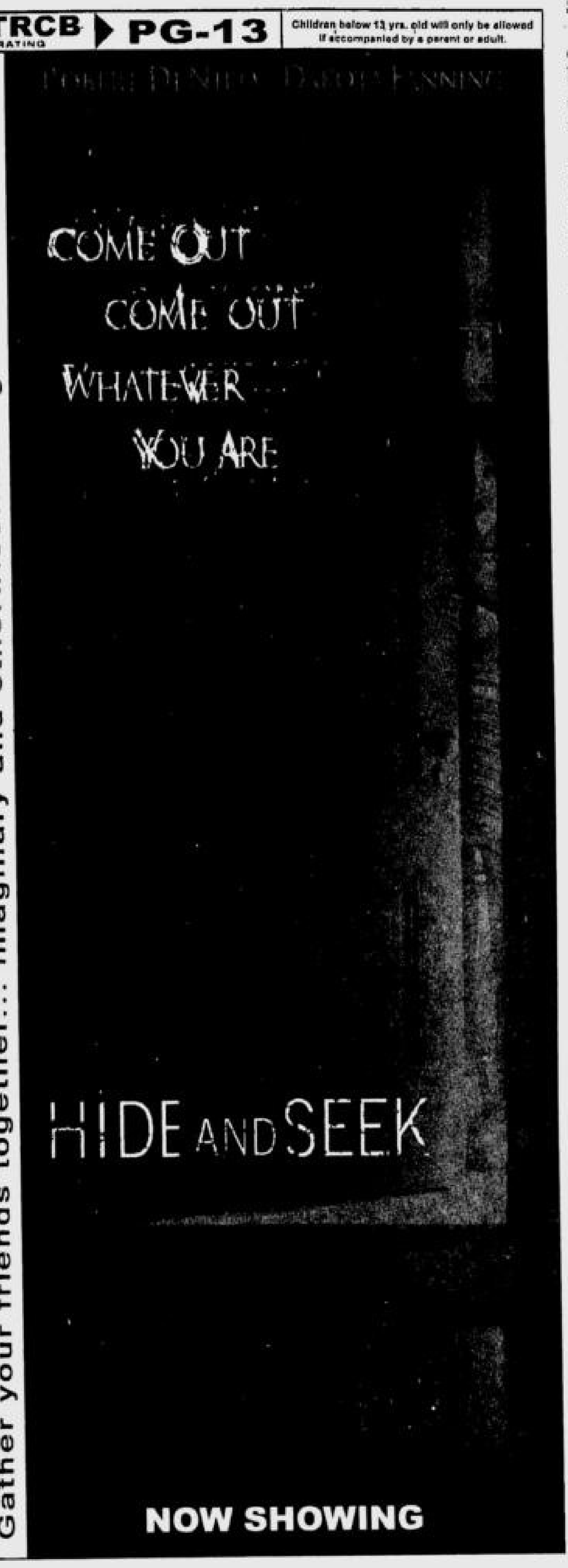
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN FIGURE OUT THE ENDING...THINK AGAIN!
Gather your friends together... imaginary and otherwise...and go see this movie!



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1	PACIFIER 10:50, 1:15, 3:30 GP	CLOSER 6:00, 8:25, 10:50 R-13
2	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS THE MOVIE 11:20, 1:40, 4:00 6:20, 8:40, 11:00 GP	
3	SAHARA 11:55, 2:45, 5:35 8:25, 11:05 PG-13	
4	HIDE AND SEEK 1:05, 4:35 6:05, 8:35, 11:00 PG-13	

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND EX

1	2	3
HIDE AND SEEK PG13	THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS MOVIE GP	FINDING NEVERLAND GP
WEDDING DATE PG13	SAMARA: RING 2 R13	SAHARA PG13

star group of cinemas movie guide
IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

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3 Pelukang Itim	1 Ong Bak	1 Legendary Street Fighter
4 Sahara	2 Pelukang Itim	2 Rental Reservation
5 Ong Bak	3 Under Renovation	
	4 Under Renovation	
	5 Sahara	
	6 Wedding Date	

Baffling critics

HONG KONG movie star Stephen Chow's action comedy "King Fu Hustle" kicked up a storm when it opened in the United States last weekend, but left delighted film critics battling to describe it. US critics raved about the film, set in a 1940s Chinese city that appears to be Shanghai or Hong Kong, but were at a loss as how to define its genre or even describe the high-kicking action epic.

"A film in which Jackie Chan and Buster Keaton meet Quentin Tarantino and Bugs Bunny," wrote respected American critic Roger Ebert. "It's been a long time—you might have to go back to the Bruce Lee era—since a martial-arts film busted through the limits of physical freedom as wildly, and promiscuously, as 'Kung Fu Hustle'," raved Entertainment Weekly.

The movie website FilmCritic.com gave the picture four stars out of five, saying it "reaches a crescendo of absurd insanity that would make even Jackie Chan gasp." "Quentin Tarantino wishes he were Stephen Chow," roared E-online in praise of the unusual film. *AFP*

Kyla, Kylie, Isha and Missy

pecially For You," Robbie Williams in "Kids" and Nick Cave in "Where the Wild Roses Grow"), the songs of Minogue are best heard in clubs where partying and flirting make a difference.

Honest Higgins

Another Australian, Missy Higgins, has just won our hearts with the emotional sensitivity and lyrical excellence she displays in her debut CD, "The Sound of White."

Higgins was reportedly pursued early on by major record labels abroad but took her time, preferring to sharpen her songwriting skills while traveling and gigging around town.

When she finally relented and went into the studio, Higgins had a wealth of material that probably had her producer (John Porter) and collaborators (like recording mixer Jay Newland of Norah Jones fame) excited no end.

The music of Higgins can best be described as honest and personal. It speaks with the sincerity of lovers and friends with whom we have shared great books and films and music and the poetry of the human condition. It is spare, just acoustic guitars, piano and minimal rhythm section underlining the contemplative voice of Higgins. It is articulate in its expression of faith and commitment in romance, notwithstanding the anxiety, sadness and pain that comes into it.

Listen closely to the 13 songs in "The Sound of White" and discover truths that may have hurt us in the past but which now give us the will and the strength to believe in the power of love. And for all its literate qualities, this album poses one challenge: go figure what exactly Higgins means by "white" in the title track.

Far from ordinary

Kyla and Isha, meanwhile, are two new local artists whose respective debut CDs also succeed in making a connection to our senses.

Kyla's "Not Your Ordinary Girl" is a special edition CD, which means there are videos and extra tracks (marketing strategies to counter piracy). In 15 songs Kyla interprets covers made famous by the likes of Keith Martin, Michael Jackson and Gary Valenciano, as well as compositions by established and aspiring Filipino songwriters/musicians.

These are pop songs and in the current scene that means a preoccupation with rhythm & blues inflections, which explains why Kyla is labeled an R&B artist. She does have a feel for this soulful type of music, and in the album there is a good measure of vocal elegance and style for us to enjoy.

KYLA: vocal elegance

Our wish is for Kyla to expand her horizons and, in case she's really up to it, explore the rich diversity of this thing they call R&B.

Over and over

Which brings us to Isha, otherwise known as Pearlsha Abubakar, a writer and editor who had stints in broadcast media and music publications before deciding to spread her wings as a full-fledged singer-songwriter.

"Time and Again," her debut CD, reflects her love of "playing over and over" the songs that give her joy. In her case, it's quite a delight turning such '80s pop gems as the Go-Gos' "Head Over Heels," Tears For Fears' "Everybody Wants To Rule the World," and Madonna's "Cherish" into a jazz mode.

It's Isha's love of jazz that also leads her to plumb the beauty of such classics as "Round Midnight" (Bernie Hanighen, Thelonious Monk & Cootie Williams), "Our Love Is Here To Stay" (George & Ira Gershwin) and "I'll Be Seeing You" (Sammy Fain & Irving Berlin).

But lest we think she's just dabbling on covers for fun, Isha presents eight of her own compositions, sung with her on piano and supported by a minimal set of session musician friends. In these tracks, her literary sense and knack for storytelling come to fore, especially in the bittersweet "Tomas and Tereza," about a couple "who loved each other to pieces and tears."

Like Mishka Adams, Isha is another promising discovery signed to the internationally prestigious Candid Records label. And, like Missy Higgins, the music of Isha demands close listen, otherwise we end up missing an element that may give happiness to our disaffected lives.

Acting, singing workshops

ONGOING: workshops in acting, musical theater, modeling, imaging, streetdance, breakdance, jazz funk, speech and voice for kids to adults, ages 4 to 65, conducted by WORKSHOPS@ABS-CBN.

The first set started on Monday and winds up April 29; the second starts May 9, ends May 27. Workshoppers will participate in a graduation show.

"Star Maker" Johnny Manahan, senior vice president of Star Magic, the network's talent center, and "mentor to the stars" Beverly Vergel are at the helm of the training.

Workshop fee is P5,950. Venues are: ABS-CBN Compound in Quezon City, St. Joseph's Academy in Las Piñas and San Beda College in Alabang. Call (02) 415-3828 or e-mail workshops@abs-cbn.com.

Free voice training

The Center for Pop Las Piñas Branch conducts a free voice training and singing workshop at the 2nd level Wellness Hub of Starmall Las Piñas on April 22. Call 872-5249.

With Artist's Hub Fun Arts Workshop, Starmall also offers basic acting, music and theater workshops for kids ages 8-16, and advanced music, theater and acting lessons for adults 17 years and older. Classes are held Monday to Saturday at Starmall Edsa-Shaw, April 18 to May 21. Call 723-8258.

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NON-STOP ACTION, STUNNING VISUAL EFFECTS
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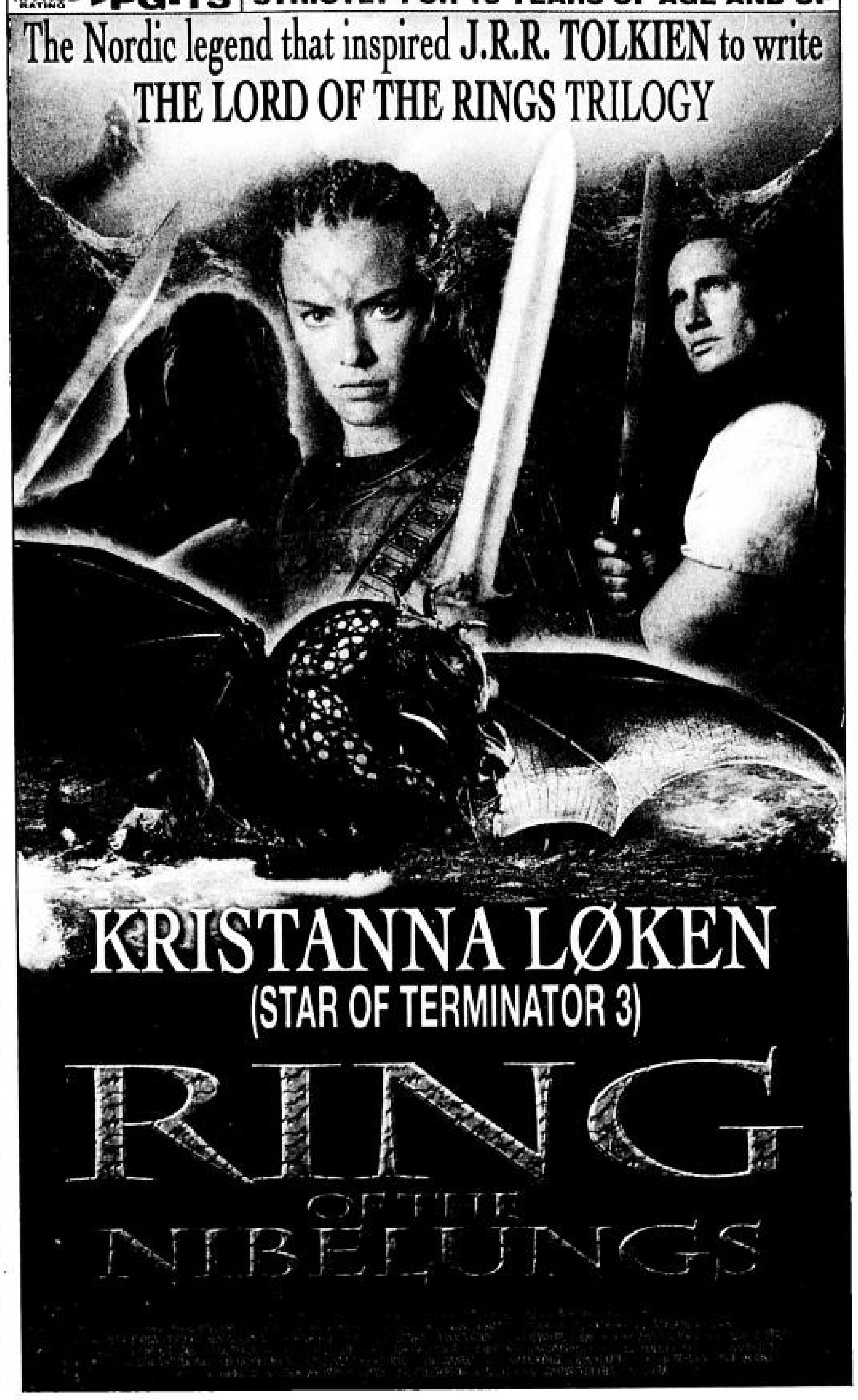
The Nordic legend that inspired J.R.R. TOLKIEN to write
THE LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY
KRISTANNA LØKEN
(STAR OF TERMINATOR 3)
RING
OF THE
NIBELUNGS

OPENS APRIL 20
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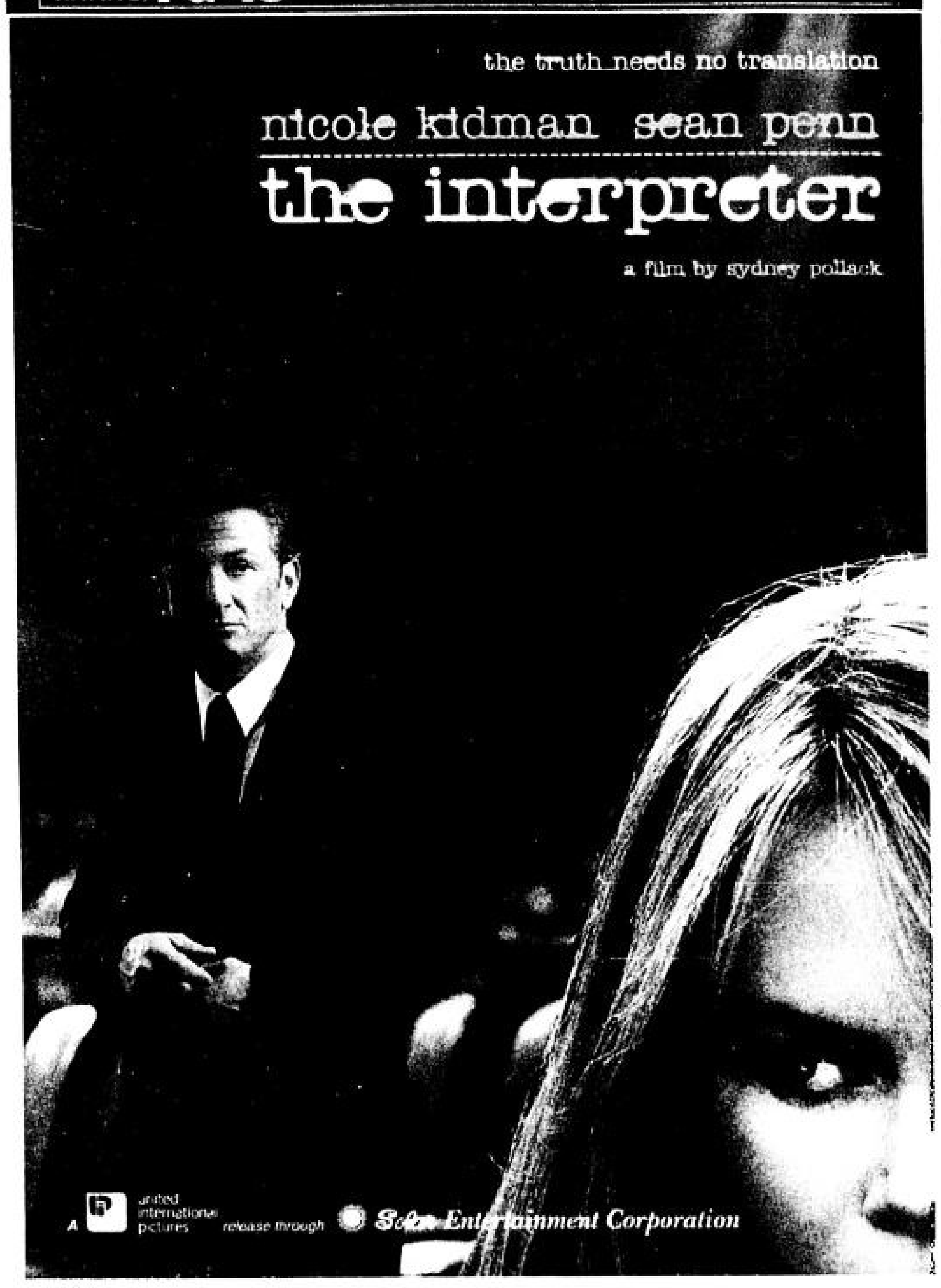
the truth needs no translation
nicole kidman sean penn
the interpreter
a film by sydney pollack
A united international pictures release through Solar Entertainment Corporation

MTRCB RATING ▶ R-18 Strictly for ADULTS No one below 18 yrs. old may be admitted

DIGITALVIVA

DIGITAL VIVA LAUNCHES ITS GROUNDBREAKING FIRST. FROM AWARD-WINNING INDIE DIRECTOR JON RED.

Viva takes its first bold step into the digital film revolution with the production of "Boso." A dark comedy directed by Jon Red and shot entirely on mini-digital video.

Boso tells the story of Jake, the caretaker of a rooming house who spends his nights peeping on his tenants through holes he has bored on the ceiling. This hobby endows him with knowledge about the private habits of the people who live in the various rooms, so much so that he likens himself to a god, who is ever aware of the innermost secrets of his subjects.

His being a peeping-tom becomes intensely pleasurable when a young married couple moves in. Jake is instantly smitten with the new bride and finds himself spending more and more time in the ceiling. One of these instances leads to an unexpected twist and dramatic confrontation.

DIRECTED BY JON RED

Allen Dizon
Ella V JC Parker
Special participation Bembol Roco Joel Torre Ronnie Lazaro Tado Justin de Leon
Katya Santos Gwen Garci and Jeffrey Quizon
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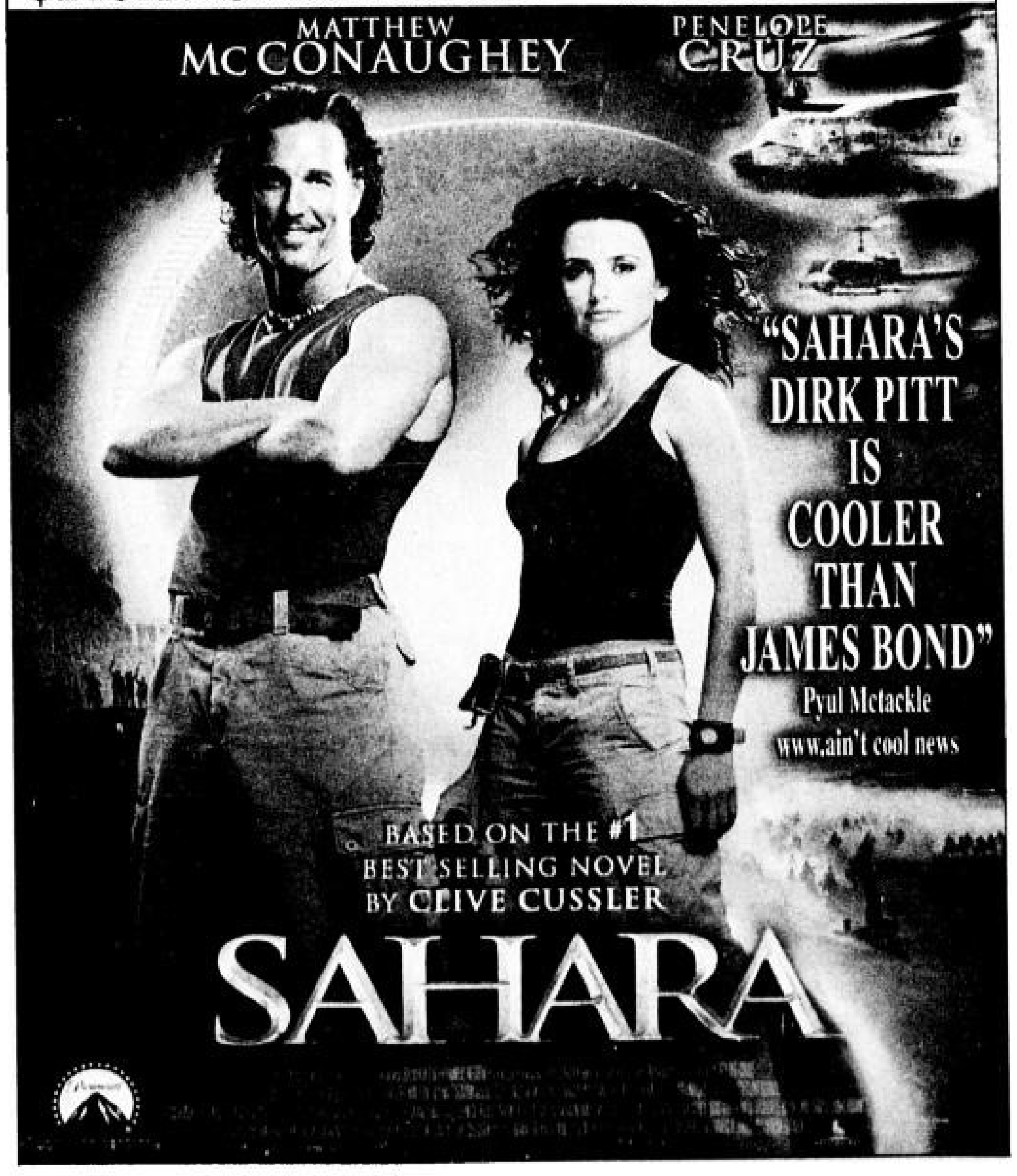
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PENELOPE CRUZ
"SAHARA'S DIRK PITT IS COOLER THAN JAMES BOND"
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SAHARA

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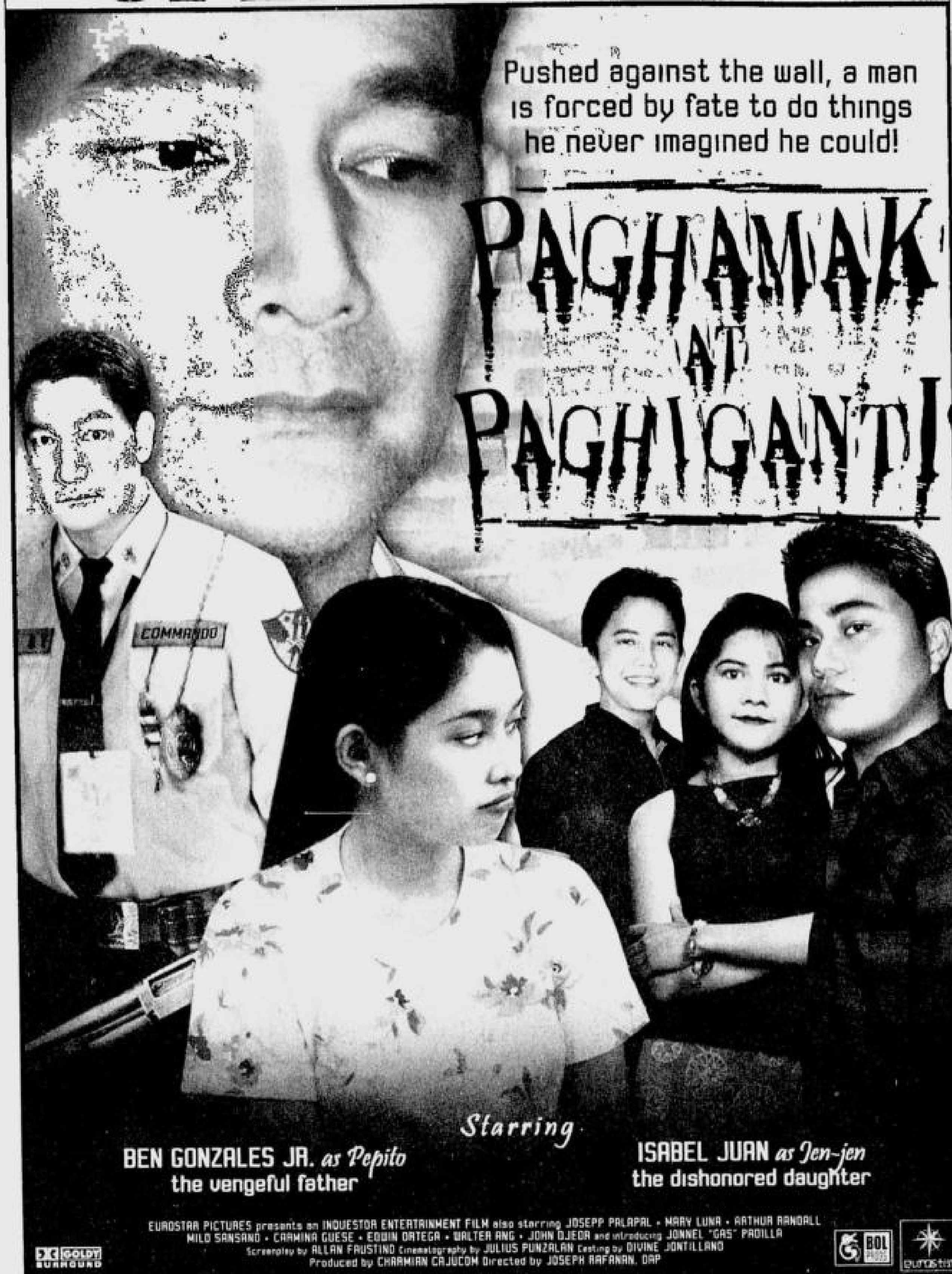
Pushed against the wall, a man is forced by fate to do things he never imagined he could!
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Screenplay by ALLAN FAUSTINO Cinematography by JULIUS PUNZALAN Casting by DIVINE JONTILLANO
Produced by CHARMIAN CAJUCOM Directed by JOSEPH RAFANAN, DAP
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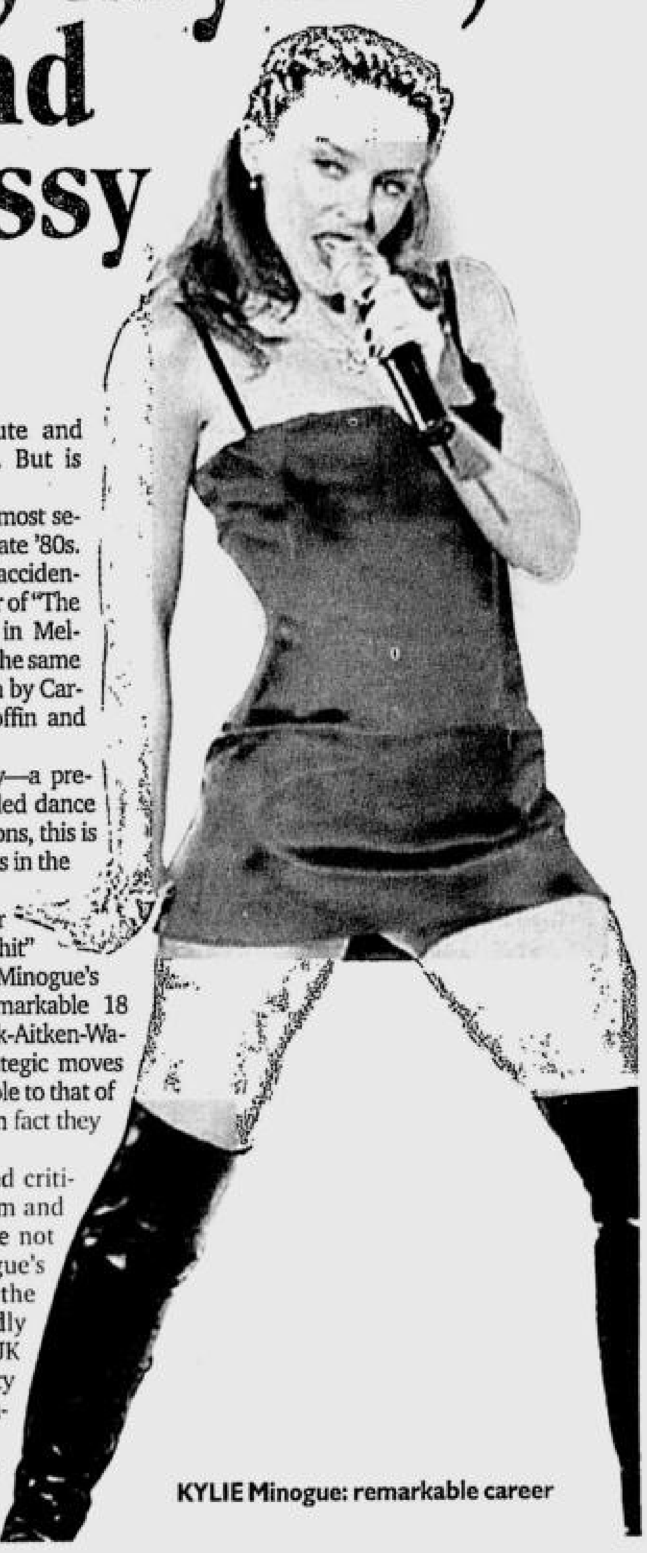
Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

Kyla, Kylie, Isha and Missy

SPIN CITY

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor


KYLIE Minogue: remarkable career

KYLA, Kylie, Isha and Missy: cute and catchy names for women artists. But is their music worth our attention?

Of the four, Kylie Minogue is the most senior, having been around since the late '80s. An actress on Australian TV, she was accidentally discovered while singing a cover of "The Loco-Motion" at a benefit concert in Melbourne. Minogue went on to record the same song, a dance tune originally written by Carole King and ex-husband Gerry Goffin and first sung by Little Eva in 1962.

Minogue's version is synth-heavy—a predominant character of what we called dance music in the '80s. With a few variations, this is what we hear in most of the 33 tracks in the CD "Ultimate Kylie."

According to the album liner notes, 31 of the songs were "smash hit" singles at the time of their release. Minogue's singing career has spanned a remarkable 18 years, propped in part by the Stock-Aitken-Waterman songwriting team and strategic moves that has her image almost comparable to that of the ultimate '80s icon, Madonna. (In fact they do sound uncannily alike.)

But while Madonna has gained critical respect for stretching the form and content of her later works, we're not so sure what to make of Minogue's output thus far. Even if many of the cuts in "Ultimate Kylie" reportedly topped the Australian and UK charts—and given our propensity to catch on—we doubt if her music really matters in our lives.

Except for some interesting turns (duets with Jason Donovan in "Es-

KYLA/A31

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE
Wednesday April 13, 2005

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Showbiz No. 1 (4.25 PM)	Gatekeepers (5.10 PM)	Gundam Seed (5.35 PM)	The Road To Stardom	TV Patrol		Krystala	Hiram	Spirits	Kamao	TBA	Yes Yes Show			Insider
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	EZ Shop	PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol		Look Who's Talking	
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Now and Forever	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Hungry Heart	Knockout	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Darna	All About Eve (8.45 PM)	Full House (9.15 PM)		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
RPN 9		Metro TV Shopping	Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Scam Tactics	The Ring	First 48 (Hrs)		Trading Spouses		Extreme Make-Over		Newswatch Now	Pangako Mo	Cargo For Truth	
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Lifestyle		On Air Tambayan		Direk	Junior Reyes Report	Bestfriends	Celebrity Single	Retro TV	IBC News Tonite	Breaking Barriers	
JackTV		Wwe Heat		WWE Confidential		Fantastic Four	Static Shock	Godzilla	Incredible Hulk	Stargate SG1		Wwe Raw				Wwe Heat		WWE Confidential	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Combo Nick				Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix						Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX		Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Live!		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Simple Life	Knock First	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Complete Savages	What I Like About You	Who Wants To Marry My Dad		Last Comic Standing		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
Cinema One		I Will Survive				May Minamahal				Mistah			Persona	Macho Dancer (9.15 PM)				Time & Tide	
Studio 23		Urban MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	Batman Beyond	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	C.S.I.			Las Vegas		News Central	Oprah		The Good Life With Cory Quirino
AXN		The Amazing Race 7		Maximum Exposure (Season II)		Ripley's Believe It or Not		7 Days (Season III)		Pensacola (Season III)		The Amazing Race 7		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 5)		Fear Factor (Season V)		CSI: NY (Season I)	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		American Idol		Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol		Philly		JAG		Friends	American Idol
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Showreal Asia		Taboo		Dangerous Jobs		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wow!/Dogs With Jobs Keno, Mentor, Prince	Chimp Diaries	About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Showreal Asia		Taboo	
Solar Sports	IBF Yonex Japan Open '05				Boxing: Vargas vs. Joval				Women's Volleyball '04				NBA TV Daily	NBA Game: Boston @ Philadelphia					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Wolfgang Puck's	E! Entertainment Special 101 Most Shocking Moments		You're Invited	Life & Style		Style Star	Nigella Bites II	Breathing Room	Genuine Article
HBO			Changing Lanes (3.45 PM)				Laughter On The 23rd Floor			Enough (7.05 PM)				Jumanji			Ghost Ship (10.40PM)		
Star Movies			Captain Corelli's Mandolin				Gone Fishin' (5.45 PM)				Marines (7.25 PM)			Stormcatcher			28 Days Later (10.40PM)		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	The Woody Woodpecker Show	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	X-Men Evolution	Codename Kids Next Door	Gundam Wing	Shaman King	The Powerpuff Girls	Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi	Ed, Edd N Eddy (9.15 PM)	Dexter's Laboratory	Time Squad	Thundercats	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Gundam Seed
ESPN			ESPN Great Outdoor Games																
Disney Channel	Mr Bean The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/ Unstakable Bunny	Buzz Lightyear Of Star Command	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr Bean The Animated Series	House Of Mouse	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	America's Funniest Home Video	According To Jim	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax	Mind Of The Crime (2.45 PM)			Sniper 2 (4.15 PM)			Dead Easy (5.45 PM)				Body Language			Patriot Games				Dark Waters (10.55PM)	
Hallmark Channel	Who's The Boss	Missing		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Mad About You	Who's The Boss	Bewitched	The District		Missing		A Carol Christmas			Strong Medicine (10.35PM)		The District (11.25PM)
Discovery Channel		Science Mysteries		Science Frontiers		Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		The Real Olympics				Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Hour Asia	
Sports Plus				Italia Serie A				You've Got to See This	Inside the PGA	NBA Game Portland vs. Sn Antonio					Bikini Destination	World Poker Tour Ep 13 Road to d' C'ships			
NBN	Value Vision	Value Vision		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		Talk Ko 'To		Linya		Teledyaryo		Sinulog Festival				Paco Park Presents	

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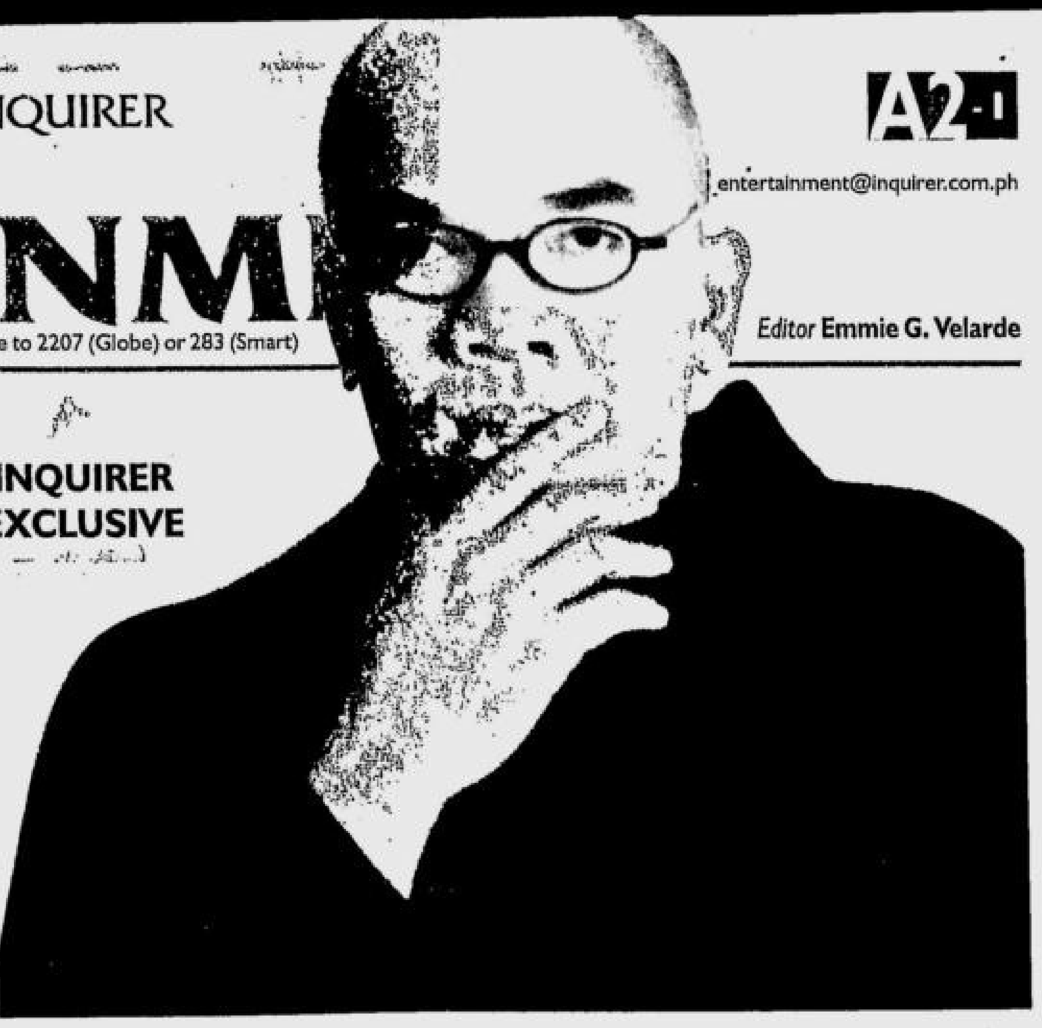
A declaration of war?

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

In an outburst on Sunday, TV host Boy Abunda showed he'd had it up to here



By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Contributor

ON LAST Sunday's edition of ABS-CBN's "The Buzz," host Boy Abunda made pointed pronouncements that could be interpreted as a declaration of war against rival network GMA 7.

He unleased a barrage of shockers after an exclusive one-on-one with Piolo Pascual, the actor implicated in a gay sex video aired by GMA 7's "Star Talk."

In the course of the interview, Abunda asked questions that had long lingered in the gossip mills concerning the star's sexuality, his close friendship with Yul Servo, the failure of his movie "Dreamboy" (which had been pitted against GMA Films' "Let the Love Begin") ... and the purported sex video.

Wrapping up the segment, Abunda recounted the series of unfortunate events that had led to this boiling point: sex-video exposés employed by both networks in the bid to win the ratings game.

The award-winning host's shocker No.1: "*Itinataya ko ang aking maliit na pangalan na totoo ang* sex video ni Ethel Booba (I hereby put my humble name on the line to say that Ethel Booba's sex video is real)."

He made a hypothetical statement that could very well translate into a veiled warning.

"*Kung sakaling totoo na may* cyber-sex video *si* Paolo Bediones, *ito'y aming pag-aaralan at iimbestigahan* (If it's true that Paolo Bediones has a cyber-sex video, we will study and investigate this.")

Bediones and Booba are talents of GMA 7.

Defense

Abunda has refused to grant interviews since the Sunday bombshell. Close associates said he actually avoided the crew of "TV Patrol" right after "The Buzz."

But to INQUIRER Entertainment, he said a few things.

"I am not declaring war against anybody," he said in a phone interview. "I am merely defending talk shows."

Abunda's associates revealed that he was bothered by his own observation that talk shows had become the "whipping boy" for all the ills of the entertainment industry.

Referring to the most recent eruption of the networks' feud, an insider said: "It is disturbing that the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) has taken a hands-off policy in the Pascual sex-video case. Moreover, the Pami (Professional Artist Managers, Inc.) cannot do anything. Their hands are tied since they don't have policing powers. They cannot sanction the erring networks."

But since last week, when ABS-CBN wrote a protest letter to Pami regarding the offending "Star Talk" episode, the managers' group has issued a strongly worded official statement, stressing that its members would remain "relentless" in pursuing the cause of "ethical entertainment journalism" on TV.

In the response addressed to Johnny Manahan, ABS-CBN senior vice president for Star Magic, the network's talent arm (who wrote the protest letter) Pami said on Saturday:

"It is high time [the whole industry got its] act together. Pami ... will continue to seek the cooperation of various groups in the community to achieve its objective."

Ed Instrella, a Pami founding member, described the situation as "ominous," one that merited "quick and decisive" action from all sectors concerned.

Option

INQUIRER Entertainment asked Instrella whether the matter could be elevated to the Advertising Board. In the past, advertisers have been "persuasive" in dealing with shows that required a little discipline.

"Yes, that is an option," Instrella said.

Abunda said this did not sit well with him.

In his monologue last Sunday, he enumerated the "inspiring" stories "The Buzz" had done—like Klaudia Koronel's graduation from college; JC Parker's devotion to her incarcerated mother; and Jodi Sta. Maria's romance with Pampi Lacson.

Even GMA 7's "S-Files" had aired similarly positive reports.

The TV insider, however, pointed out that talk show producers traditionally had a hard time finding viewers for good news.

"It's the TV landscape," the source explained. "We've been doing all these 'good news' stories, but the market is not responding. The best thing to do right now is to plead with the public to ignore spectacle and sensationalist TV, and to patronize empowering, inspiring television."

In short, the ball is now in the viewers' court.

"We are posing a challenge to televiewers," the TV insider said. "If they find anything offensive on TV talk shows, they should switch channels."

Or at least press the mute button.

Pami member Norma Japitana shared that exact sentiment with INQUIRER Entertainment in a previous interview. "Everyone should be vigilant," Japitana said. "Most especially televiewers."

"I just wanted to speak out," Abunda said of Sunday's outburst. "I acknowledge that talk shows have frailties and excesses, but we are still in the middle of this journey of educating and correcting ourselves."

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2005 PBA FIESTA CONFERENCE *Apr. 13* *4:45pm Purefoods vs. Sta Lucia / 7:35pm Ginebra vs. Shell*	THE CASCADES: LIVE IN MANILA *April 15 Friday, 8pm*
RIVERMAYA & KITCHIE NADAL LIVE! *April 16, Saturday, 8pm*	2005 PBA FIESTA CONFERENCE *Apr. 17* *4:15pm Alaska vs. Red Bull / 6.35pm Ginebra vs. Talk N Text*

CENTER EVENTS

SALE EVENTS	*Van Heusen Dress Shirt Sale ongoing until April 17 and Mod Milano Jewelry Sale ongoing until April 15, Ground Floor of Gateway Mall*
EXHIBITS	*Pope John Paul II Memorial Exhibit ongoing until April 16 at Level 3 of Gateway Mall*
SPECIAL PROMOS	*Hush Puppies Get Into the Wave Promo ongoing until April 30 at Level 2 of Gateway Mall.*

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WHEN a movie hits it big at t
is tempted to push his luck
by way of a sequel. Sometim
off, as in the case of the po
"Shrek," "Lord of the Rings,
"Star Wars," film franchises.

More often, however, seq
as their original films becau
generally loses its ability to t

So, writers of sequels hav
them to generate fresh burst
take the story to new height
directions.

That challenge appears t
writers of "Miss Congenialit
ulous," the sequel to Sandr
rer, in which she played an
undercover as a beauty page

The original movie clicke
ers that it ended up grossing
the standard for a mega-hit.
some 15 Hollywood prod
$100M, certifying them as h
four reach the $200M mar
Congeniality's" exceptional

the movie, Quizon plays Jak
house who spends nights sp
time becomes more, uh, ste
move into one of the rooms

Finding Neverla

Directed by Marc Forster
Stars Johnny Depp, Kate
Hoffman

Synopsis: Set in London
to bring Peter Pan to life, fro
premiere.

Desson Thomson, in his
"The tale of Peter Pan, the b
over the sleeping rooftops o
time story? Don't even try t
I flew there, too... Depp is a
And his Scottish accent, 'I ha
work. A man-boy who certa
knows the score when it co
never be sent to bed,' he wa
er.' It's a super line for the m

Ong-Bak: The T

Directed by Prachya Pink
Stars Tony Jaa, Petchtha

Synopsis: When the head
stolen, young Ting is selecte
as he was left on the temple s

home country and elsewher
with both brutality and grace
cinematic mayhem that can
fortunately, the plot and the

* * *

The Ring 2 (Sam

Directed by Hideo Nakat
Stars Naomi Watts, D
Spacek, Elizabeth Perkin

Synopsis: Hideo Nakata d
Japanese horror films "Ring
2" (1999), although "The Ri
of "Ringu 2." It is a new dep
newspaper reporter, leaves
nearby Oregon state. It's stil
brings death to whoever wat
awful Tagalog movies which
named Samara tries to poss

Roger Ebert, in his March 1
'The Ring Two,' while limited.
solutely no sense, while neve
deal of the time. It is like an e
and mood conspire to create
cannot possibly explain the re

The Wedding Da

Directed by Clare Kilner
Stars Debra Messing, De

nifer Aniston role, Messing

Diminishing returns

he tills, its producer
ind do a "take two"
es, the gamble pays
ular "James Bond,"
"Harry Potter," and

iels don't do as well
se a twice-told tale
iscinate.
e their work out for
s of excitement, and
ahd more dynamic

have daunted the
2: Armed and Fab-
h Bullock's hit star-
FBI agent who went
ant contestant.
l so well with view-
more than $200M,
On any given year,
ictions make over
ts, but only three or
so the first "Miss
showing at the tills
was no mean feat.

This time around, however, Bullock's character is given less appealing things to do, like acting as the FBI's spokesperson at media events. What's so exciting about that?

For real excitement, the plot puts Bullock's best friends, the new Miss USA, in harm's way, so Bullock and other agents have to do whatever it takes to protect her, even if it means endangering their own lives.

That does not generate a sense of danger, but the production fritters it away with comedic detours and flourishes, like a long female impersonator portion that doesn't really come into its own.

Logically, Bullock's character should have taken center stage in this impersonation section, but she may not have had what it took, it was her black sidekick who did the main impersonation, and she wasn't very good at it, either.

The final series of sequences involved an underwater rescue attempt, which turned into a potentially deadly trap for the rescuers. It did enable the film to end on a high action note, but

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

it felt borrowed from more overtly action-adventure capers, and didn't really fit this movie's crime-caper format.

What will Bullock do to recover lost ground? Not "Miss Congeniality 3," we'll wager.

Gary Sinise

WITH the strong showing of the new crime series, "CSI: New York" on AXN, lead star **Gary Sinise** is experiencing a second spring in his career. The TV show has come right in the nick of time, as the actor's big screen career has tapered off.

Sinise benefits from the show's success, but the series also owes him a debt of gratitude because his performance sets a high standard for other members of the show's cast and production staff.

In the new series, Sinise plays Detective Mac Taylor, who leads a team of dedicated CSI agents. As a top investigator, Mac solves cases by applying Veneziano's theory of quantum physics: everything is connected, and everyone has a story to tell.

At the same time, he struggles to bring order to his own fractured life story: his wife has died in the 9/11 Tragedy.

Aside from his Oscar nomination for his performance as the crippled veteran in "Forrest Gump," Sinise received the Golden Globe in 1996 for his portrayal of the title role in the "Truman" TV biopic. He has also won plaudits for his performance in the TV movie, "George Wallace."

His feature film credits include "Apollo 13," "Ransom," "The Green Mile," "The Human Stain," "Snake Eyes," "The Forgotten," and "Mission to Mars."

Session Road

SOME Baguio-based musicians have decided to take the road less traveled. The group is called Session Road and have released their latest album, "Suntok sa Buwan," with 13 cuts that tell a beguiling tangle of stories about journeys that traverse the crossroads of life.

The group includes lead vocalist **Hannah Romawac**, her brother **Chavi** (drummer) and **JV** (percussion and harmonica), **Richard Carandang** (bass) and **Coy Placido** (lead guitar).

Songs in the album include "As We Kiss," "Cool-Off," "Eager Angels," "Tutu," "Leaving You," and "Lullaby."

At Casa San Miguel

CASA San Miguel in San Antonio, Zambales, will present a stage play, "Si Julian, Yung Dagat, Ang Sirena," on April 23, 30 and May 6. The presentation features the arts center's resident groups—shadow players, visual artists, musicians and theater artists.

The solo concerts of up-and-coming violinists will also be held—**Joseph Valdes** on April 29, **Christian Tan** on May 6, and **Lorenzo Raval** on May 13. Concerts start at 6 p.m. Call 903-8657.

PENING TODAY

Boso

Directed by Jon Red
Stars Jeffrey Quizon, Katya Santos, Bembol Roco, Joel Torre
Exclusively at Robinsons Galleria and Robinsons Ermita

Synopsis: "Boso," is Viva Films' first-ever feature presentation shot entirely on mini-digital video. A dark comedy, it is directed by Red, who also wrote the screenplay based on a story by May L. In
a Peeping Tom, janitor and caretaker of a rooming
ying on tenants through holes in the ceiling. This pas-
my when Cecilia and Allen, a young married couple,

* * *

nd

Winslet, Julie Christie, Radha Mitchell, Dustin

n 1904, the film follows J.M. Barrie's creative journey
n his first inspiration for the story up until the play's

Jov. 19, 2004, review for the Washington Post, wrote:
y who refused to grow up, and the children he spirited
London and on to Neverland—was there a better bed-
convince me there was. I know what I'm talking about:
harm. He becomes his own, subtly compelling Barrie.
e to say, is more than close enough for Hollywood
ly ignores the responsibilities of his own marriage, he
es to preserving one's innocence. 'Young boys should
s Sylvia at one point. 'They always wake up a day old-
vie, an even better one for life."

* * *

ai Warrior

aew
Wongkamlao, Pumwaree Yodkamol

t.Ong-Bak—the sacred Buddha of a poor Village—is
to rescue the relic. Ting has an affinity with the statue
teps as a baby and raised by monks who taught him

muay thai but forbade him to use it in combat. But now he is forced to delve into a seedy underworld and tries to avoid temptation.

Ty Burr, in his Feb. 2 review for the Boston Globe, wrote: "The latest contestant for the title of New Bruce Lee is Panom Yeerum, better known as Tony Jaa. He's from Thailand [and] has a soulful simmer [reminiscent] of the young Jimmy Smits. . . Lee may have had his fists of fury, but Jaa has inner forearms of rage... 'Ong-Bak' set box-office records in his
in East Asia... Filmed by director Prachya Pinkaew
the [muay thai] sequences are four-star examples of
stand with anything by Lee, Jackie Chan, or Jet Li. Un-
cting in 'Ong-Bak' rate a star and a half."

ara)

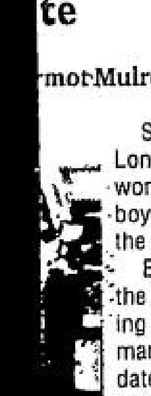
vid Dorfman, Sissy

rected the two famous
" (1998) and "Ringu
g Two" is not a remake
rture, as Rachel, a
eattle and gets a job in
about that video that
hes it (just like some
bring brain damage to whoever watches). A dead girl
ss Rachel's son Aidan.
8 review in the Chicago Sun Times, wrote: "The charm of
s real enough; it is based on the film's ability to make ab-
heless generating a real enough feeling of tension a good
rcise in cinema mechanics: Images, music, photography
sense of danger, even though at any given moment we
es under which that danger might manifest itself."

* * *

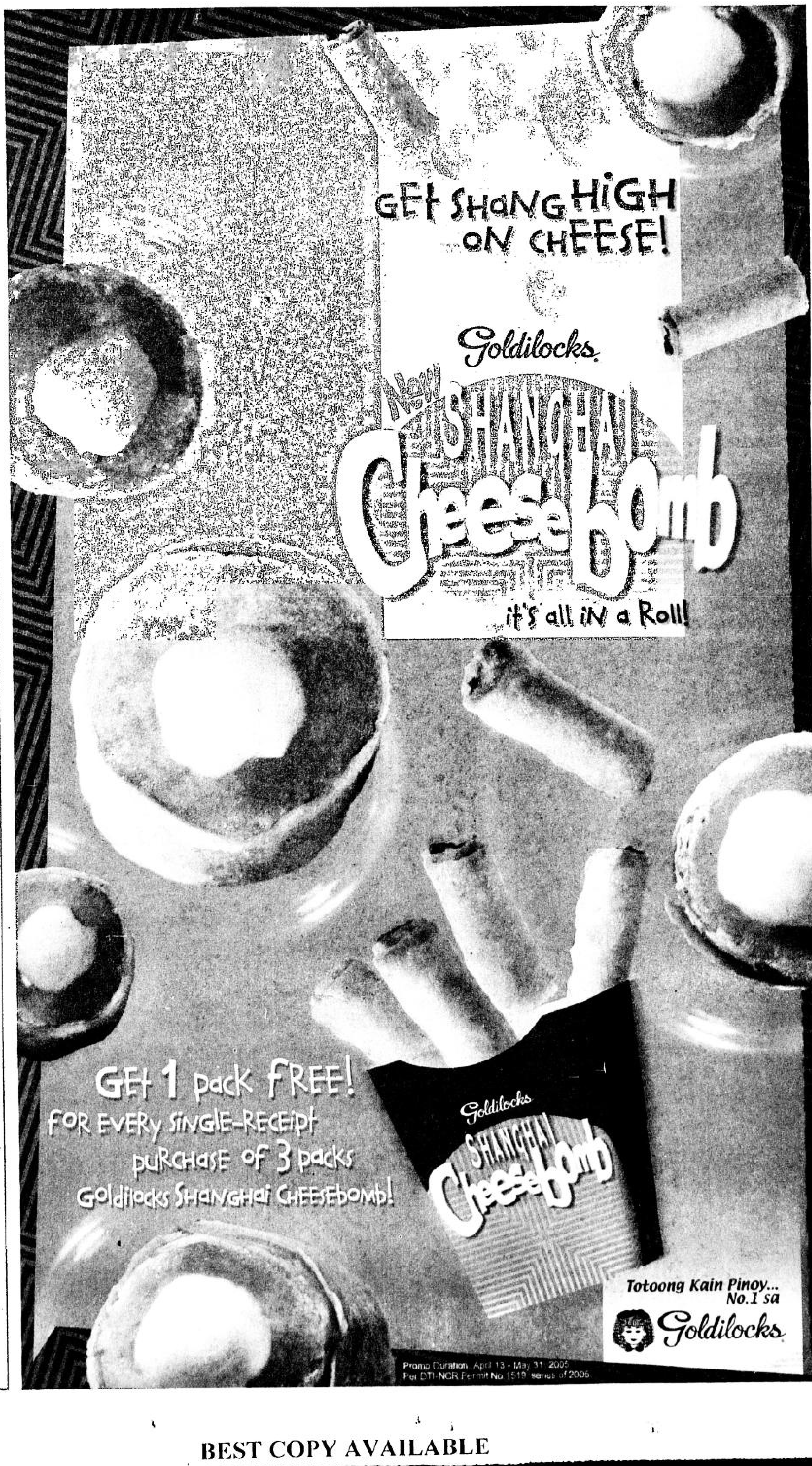
te

rmot Mulroney, Jeremy Sheffield



Synopsis: About to return to her parent's London home for her sister's wedding, a young woman hires a male-escort to pretend to be her boyfriend when she is forced to reencounter the best man, her ex-fiancé.

Eleanor Ringel Gillespie, in her review for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, wrote: "Mixing the new rules of sex with the old rules of romantic love, 'The Wedding Date' may be less a date movie than a gal-pal flick (a gal-pal flick being considerably raunchier than a chick flick). Mulroney makes a fine fantasy figure, oozing sex, sensitivity and a manly sense of humor. And a hairstyle that's somehow vaguely '80s-ish, yet enhances his romance-novel cover-boy appeal. In what could be called the Jan-
sprightly and adorably neurotic."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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1519 series of 2005

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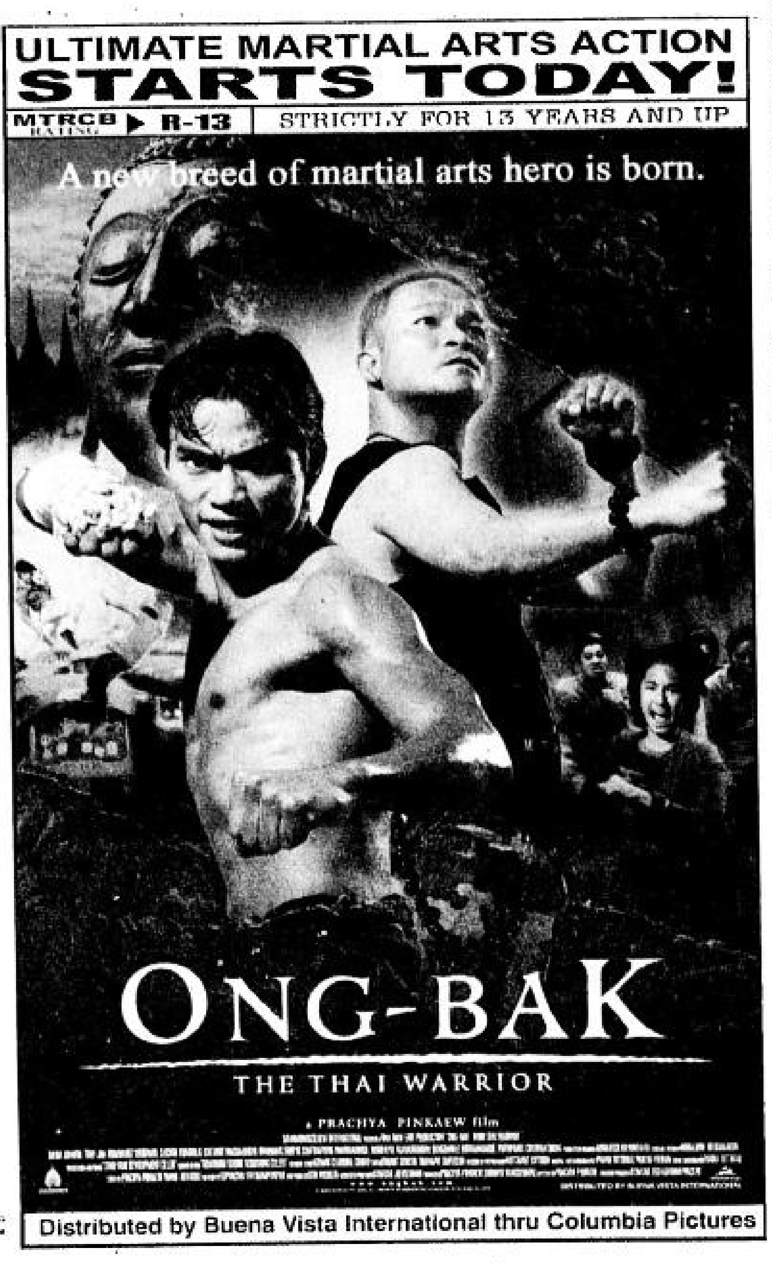
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ONG-BAK
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"STARSTRUCK" survivor Yasmien Kurdi (center) with "Pinoy Pop Superstar" singers CJ Concepcion, Nika Umipig, GP Sorita, Adelyn Santos and Kelly Guanco will be at Enchanted Kingdom this Sunday.

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1 WEDDING DATE
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2 FINDING NEVERLAND
MTRCB: GP

3 SPONGEBOB
MTRCB: GP

4 SAHARA
MTRCB PG-13

PREMIERE THEATRE SAMARA (Ring 2)
MTRCB. PG-13 11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50 LMF
Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice

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2-00

The Spongebob Squarepants Movie Promo

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See posters for details

Purchase special Spongebob Squarepants merchandise from the Kidz Station and National Bookstore booths at the Shang Cineplex Lobby (Level 6) from April 6-19, 2005

release through Solar Entertainment Corporation
Shangri-La Plaza

Shanice Michael, born diva, at Sincopado Piano Bar and Hyatt's Calesa

SHOW TIME

WHEN Shanice Michael joined ABS-CBN's "Born Diva" last year, people noted that she didn't need a singing competition to prove her talent.

She did not win the grand prize, but she landed a recording stint in the US. She cuts an album in May, with popular musical director of international stature Toti Fuentes backing her up.

"I have worked with Shanice in several shows both here and abroad," Guentes says. "She has the 4/40 perfect pitch—very hard to find in a singer."

Before "Born Diva," Shanice was handpicked by Skip Moi Productions for the Hong Kong Jazz Fest sponsored by the Foreign Correspondents Club based in the former Crown Colony.

These days, Shanice has been busy touring the country. This month, she has shows around Metro Manila. On April 15 starting at 9:30 p.m., she will perform at Hyatt Hotel's Calesa Bar. Tuesdays, she is at Syncopado Piano Bar and Resto on A. Mabini St. in Malate.

SHANICE Michael

Tonight

King in his first major solo concert, "King on Top of the World," at **Music Museum**, 9 p.m. Call 721-6726.

Animae at **Suburbia** in Malate

Freestyle at **19 East Music Hall**. Call 837-6903.

Jazz festival at **Merk's** with **Mon David, Eddie Katindig and Richard Merk**, Wednesdays.

MON David

Tomorrow

King in "King on Top of the World" repeat at **Music Museum**, 9 p.m. Call 721-6726.

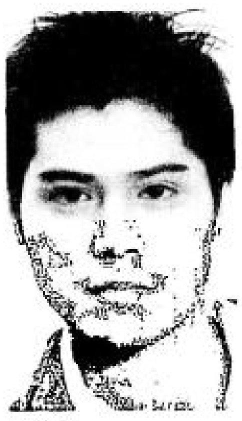
The Cascades at Hard Rock Café, featuring **Ramon Jacinto & Friends**, and **The Elderly Brothers**. Call 911-5555

Nyoy Volante w/ Mannos at **Suburbia** in Malate

Robert Seña and **Isay Alvarez** in a benefit show, "Love You, Hate You, Love You," at **Merk's**

Sheryn Regis at **Toilet Humor** in Malate.

Track at **Tavern on the Square**



KING

April 15

Cascades at the **Araneta Coliseum** with **Willie Nepomuceno**. Call 911-5555.

The Men Of Blue Blood (MOBB) at **Funnside**, Timog Ave., QC; 8 p.m.

Essence Band at The Linden Suite's **Monsoon Restaurant** in Ortigas.

Blue Ketchup at **Taste Buds, Robinsons Place** Manila, 7 p.m.

Wally Gonzales and Friends, **Sugarfree**, **True Faith**, **Pido with Take One** and **Kearney Street** back-to-back at **19 East Music Hall**. Call 837-6903.

Acoustic Jive at **Merk's**

April 16

The Cascades at the **Waterfront Hotel,** Cebu, with **Area One** as guest performers.

Rivermaya and **Kitchie Nadal** at the **Araneta Coliseum** with newcomers **Spongecola** and **Juana** as guests. Call 911-5555.

The **Moonstrucks** at **Funnside**, Timog Avenue, QC

Aretha and the Souled Out Band at **Merk's**

April 17

"StarStruck Superstar" concert series featuring **Yasmien Kurdi** at **Enchanted Kingdom**, 7 p.m.

Rachelle Ann Go at **Robinsons Pioneer**

Highway 69 at **Hard Rock Café**

Cruzin' at **Merk's**

April 18

Keystone Band at **Suburbia** in Malate

Judith Banal with Evolution at **19 East Music Hall**. Call 837-6903.

Freestyle at **Tavern on the Square**

Main Avenue at **Hard Rock Café**

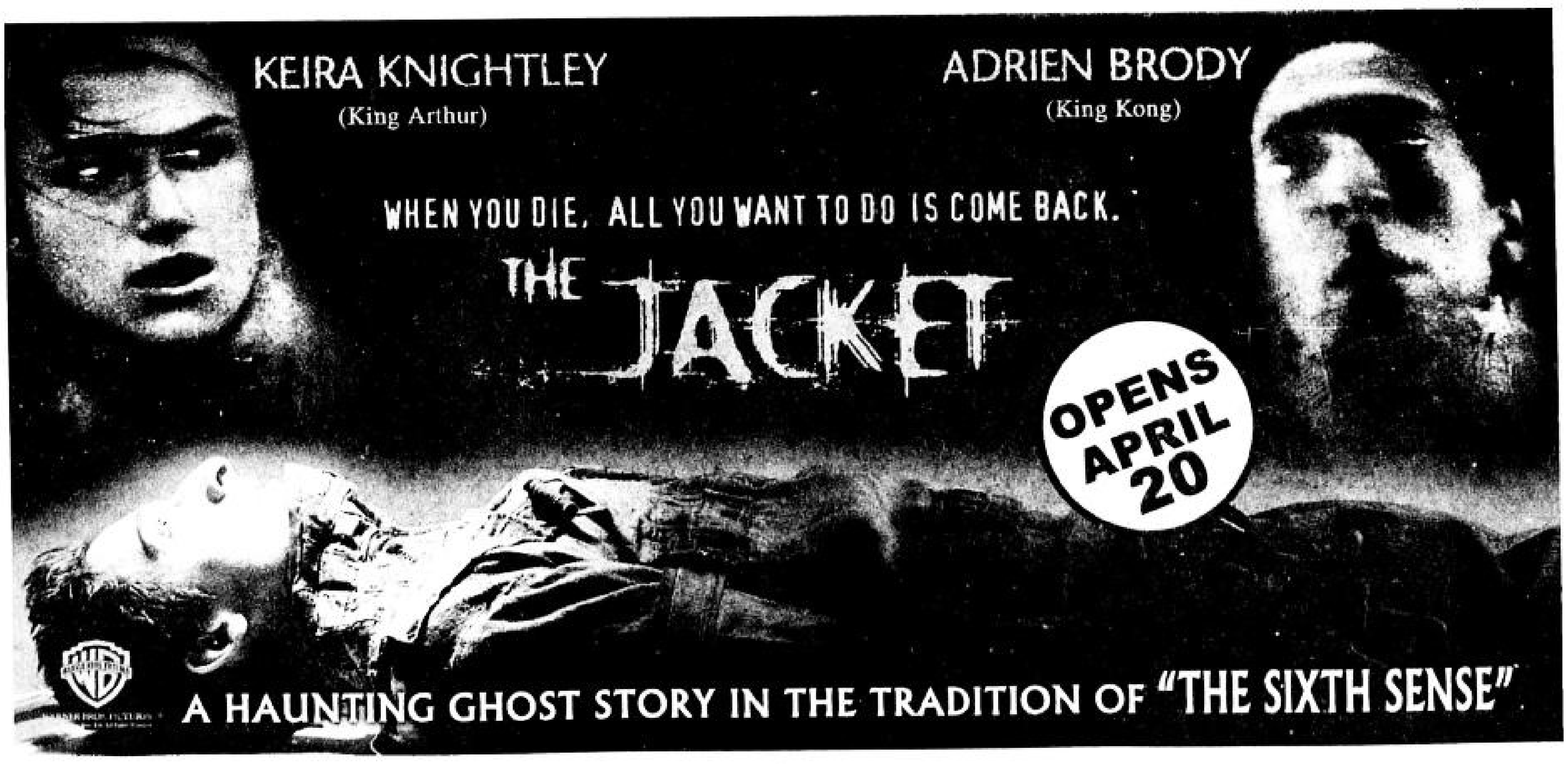
Bernie Uy at **Merk's**

April 19

Dio Marco, The Moonstrucks, Michelle de Guzman, Joy Viado and other surprise guest artists will have a fund-raising show for the eye operation of Vangie Lumanog at **Funnside**.

Freeverse at **Suburbia** in Malate, Tuesdays

M.Y.M.P. at **19 East Music Hall**. Call 837-6903.


KEIRA KNIGHTLEY
(King Arthur)
ADRIEN BRODY
(King Kong)
WHEN YOU DIE, ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS COME BACK.
THE JACKET
OPENS APRIL 20
A HAUNTING GHOST STORY IN THE TRADITION OF "THE SIXTH SENSE"

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Website: www.inq7money.net
Editor Raul O. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

February exports slip 0.6% to $2.98B

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S exports slipped by 0.6 percent in February to $2.98 billion, putting an end to the 15 consecutive months of year-on-year growth, the National Statistics Office reported yesterday.

The decline was largely brought by the slowdown in the shipments of electronics, the Philippines biggest export earner. Accounting for 65.8 percent of total shipments for the month, electronics exports fell to $1.96 billion, or 0.9 percent lower than the $1.98 billion a year ago.

Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, the country's second biggest export earners, also posted a decline in orders to $168.05 million, or 9.2 percent lower than the $184.9 million a year ago.

However, exports of ignition and other wiring sets used in vehicles, aircraft and ships, increased by 14.4 percent from $56.07 million to $64.12 million. Exports of woodcraft and furniture also rose by 24.3 percent to $31.24 million.

Other top exports for February were coconut oil, $37.73 million; metal components, $36.51 million; cathodes and sections of cathodes of refined copper, $32.11 million; petroleum products, $28.21 million, and bananas, $20.87 million.

Although exports declined, economists said the slowdown in foreign demand for Philippine products in February did not conclusively point to a weakening of exports for the whole year, given that the slowdown was very minimal.

Victor Abola, an economist from the University of Asia and the Pacific, said it was too early to judge how exports would perform for the rest of the year, saying indicators were still vague. "We have to watch out what will happen in the next month or two. If there is no rebound, then we have to make big efforts to improve our exports," he said in a telephone interview.

But the economist said the continued increase in oil prices had something to do with the slower exports. He explained that rising prices or oil, a basic commodity, resulted both in the lowering of demand for other products and the increase in the cost of business. "Rising oil prices result in a profit squeeze," he said.

Abola said that should Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing countries fulfill a pledge to pump more oil into the market, then oil prices would decelerate by about 5 to 6 percent in the second half. He noted that oil prices have declined by 10 percent, year-on-year, since last week.

Union Bank analyst Pam Concolada said the 0.6-percent decline in exports for February was not a cause for worry as it was not reflective of the export performance for the rest of the year.

She added that the slight decline in exports would not have had a negative effect on the sentiment of financial investors on the Philippines, saying there was the possibility of a rebound.

The NSO reported that Japan was the top export destination for Philippine products, accounting for $612.88 million of the total. This reflected a growth of 16.8 percent from the year-ago figure of $524.89 million.

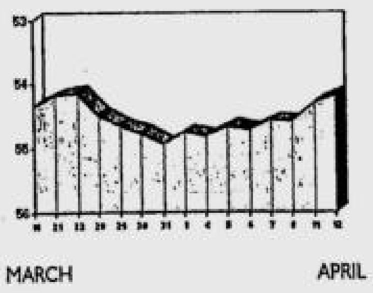
Exports to the United States, the second biggest export market, declined by 0.9 percent from $517.35 million to $512.68 million.

Other top export destinations were the Netherlands, $287.56 million; China, $252.58 million; Hong Kong, $250.77 million; Malaysia, $176.97 million; Singapore, $170.79 million; Taiwan, $139.83 million; Germany, $105.39 million; and Republic of Korea, $93.77.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



P54.175 = $1
As of 5 p.m., April 12, 2005

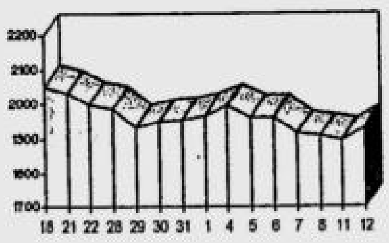
¥108.10 = $1
As of 5 p.m., April 11, 2005

GOLD: $429.30-429.80
per ounce Hong Kong, April 12, 2005

STOCK MARKET

Shares rise 1.64% on technical rebound

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



SHARE prices closed 1.64 percent higher yesterday, snapping a five-day losing streak with a substantial technical rebound, dealers said.

At the same time, turnover was light as most investors chose to stay on the sidelines to see if the upturn is sustainable in light of the recent increase in local interest rates, they said.

Additionally, the market wants to see if the government can get an increase in value-added tax (VAT) through Congress in what is seen as a crucial step toward tackling a chronic budget deficit.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index gained 31.1 points to 1,927.82, trading between 1,895.73 and 1,929.07 on volume of 626.32 million shares worth P1.06 billion.

The broader all-shares index gained 13.08 points to 1,174.86.

Gainers beat losers 60 to 18, with 49 stocks unchanged.

"Technically, the market has been ripe for bargain-hunting but volume today was light, suggesting that market players have yet to be convinced that this rise will continue," said Mark Canizares of Citisec-online.com.

He said investors were waiting to see whether Congress finally

SHARES/B3

Oil firms hint at new round of price hikes

By Abigail L. Ho

LOCAL pump prices may go up again by between 50 centavos and P1 a liter anytime soon as world oil prices showed no sign of easing.

Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association chair Fernando Martinez said there was no recourse for local oil firms but to raise prices again as their costs had become too high to bear.

"It's inevitable. We still have to recover as much as P4 a liter for diesel and P2 a liter for gasoline. Just as we thought crude prices would go down, they didn't. And so we must raise prices again soon," he said in an interview yesterday.

He said taking an even harder beating was the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products.

As world crude prices refused to let up, the prices of MOPS-based unleaded gasoline and diesel also continued to soar.

Based on documents from the Department of Energy, the benchmark Dubai crude averaged $49.11 a barrel as of April 11, almost $4 higher than the March average of $45.84.

The price of MOPS-based unleaded gasoline also surged to an average of $63.97 a barrel in the first 11 days of April, from only $59.47 last month.

The price of MOPS-based diesel likewise soared to a high April 1-11 average of $71.27 a barrel, more than $4 higher than the March average of $67.24.

Despite the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (Opec) production increase of 500,000 barrels a day starting April 1, world oil prices had continued to soar.

Ironically, on the day the Opec announced its the higher production, international prices surged even higher, going against historical trends.

Prices usually go down with

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Kirin raises stake in SMC to 20%

KIRIN Brewery Co. Ltd. bought P5.14 billion worth of additional shares in Philippine brewer San Miguel Corp., increasing its stake to 20 percent from 19.67 percent.

Kirin said in a statement that it acquired an additional 68.8 million class "B" shares of SMC on April 7 through a preferential allotment to shareholders.

SMC recently raised P17.8 billion from a stock rights offering that allowed existing shareholders the first crack to buy additional shares.

Sources said SMC was still working out the number of additional seats that will be given to Kirin after its recent purchase. But with the additional shares, Kirin is likely to clinch another board seat in SMC's 15-member board.

The Japanese firm currently holds two board seats in SMC.

Last January, Kirin increased its stake to 19.67 percent, reflecting the Japanese brewer's firm vote of confidence in the beer-based giant's long-term strategy.

"San Miguel has been our most important partner in Southeast Asia since our investment in 2002. The direction of San Miguel is in line with Kirin's Asia and Oceania strategy. Kirin supports San Miguel's strategy and I am confident that this transaction will be another successful step to strengthen our long-term partnership," Kirin president Koichiro Aramaki said last January.

SMC is taking the same expansion path as it brings its operations to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, China and Australia as part of it bid to be among the top conglomerates in the Asia-Pacific region by 2007.

The company has seen major opportunities in line with its regional leap after it advanced in its takeover bid for Australian dairy giant National Foods Ltd. when rival bidder Fonterra Group withdrew its bid. *Elizabeth L.Sanchez*

DISCLOSURES

SAN Miguel Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 17, 2 p.m. at the Ballroom, Valle Verde Country Club, Inc. Capt Henry P. Javier St. Bo. Oranbo, Pasig City. Only stockholders' of record date as of March 23 are entitled to vote at the meeting.

* * *

PHILIPPINE National Construction Corp. accepted the resignation of Mr. Pastor R. Ramos Jr. and will be replaced by Vice Chairman Rolando Macasaet until next board meeting.

* * *

ASIATRUST Development Bank entered into an Asset Sale and Purchase Agreement with Schuykill Asset Strategist, (SPV-AMC) for the transfer/sale of non performing loans with a book value of P831 million.

* * *

NEXTSTAGE, Inc. postponed the company's annual stockholders' meeting details will be announced later.

* * *

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. announced the additional listing of 181,489 shares fully paid for under the Company's Stock Option Plan. This brings the total Treasury shares to 29,237,604 shares. ***Compiled by: Chona Galang, PDI Research***

AIM ASIAN CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Creating Value Through Process Innovation

May 23 - 27, 2005

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Course Content

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Innovating Supply Chain Management
- Management of the Supply Chain
- Outsourcing

Management of Technology for Process Innovations
- Technology identification, acquisition and transfer

Learning Applications (Guided Workshop Output)
- Enhancing Competitiveness (to increase sales revenue)
- Sustaining Productivity Increases (through stakeholder benefits)

Prof. Francisco P. Bernardo, Jr. is a core faculty and guru of the AIM Asian Center for Entrepreneurship (ACE). His areas of specialization are operations management and system analysis. He also teaches management of technology for development.

Prof. Bernardo has worked with companies engaged in manufacturing, construction, insurance, banking and agriculture, as well as with government agencies and educational institutions. He was co-founder and partner of the Asian Consulting and Training Group, Inc.

Prof. Rene T. Domingo is a teacher, writer, and management consultant. He is the Sime Darby Professor of Manufacturing at the Asian Institute of Management in Manila and the program director of its Advanced Manufacturing Management Course. Schooled and trained in Japan, he has written quality and service management and world-class manufacturing practices. He trains and consults for a number of Asian companies in the field of total quality management, business process engineering and lean manufacturing. He has done research on the operations of Japanese joint venture companies in Southeast Asia.

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 12, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4	4	4	4	7,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	27.5	27.5	27	27	402,300
Bank of the Phil. Islands	50	50.5	50	50.5	374,600
China Banking Corp.	650	650	650	650	20
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.75	0.78	0.75	0.78	11,750,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	48	48.5	48	48.5	35,800
International Exch. Bank	18.25	18.25	18.25	18.25	21,600
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33.5	34	33.5	33.5	719,500
Philippine National Bank	31	31	31	31	17,000
Security Bank Corp.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	2,400
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	2500	2500	2500	2500	40
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.06	1.08	1.06	1.08	100,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1700	1720	1700	1720	400
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	15	15	15	15	100,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.16	1.22	1.16	1.16	6,466,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	840	845	840	845	36,060
Ipeople Inc.	4.35	4.6	4.35	4.6	25,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	5,100,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	10,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.08	2.08	2.08	2.08	19,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.3	3.3	3,002,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1390	1400	1390	1400	163,600
Ivantage Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	560,000
Philweb Corp.	0.02	0.02	0.019	0.02	18,400,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	17.5	17.75	17.5	17.5	25,600
Manila Electric Co. B	24.5	25.5	24.5	24.75	581,300
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.4	1,321,000
Petron Corp.	3.45	3.6	3.45	3.6	1,828,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.28	1.3	1.28	1.3	586,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.74	1.74	1.74	1.74	18,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	284,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	50,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.04	1.08	1.04	1.08	61,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.63	0.65	0.63	0.65	950,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3.35	3.35	3.3	3.3	153,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	75,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	34	34	34	34	14,400
Jollibee Foods Corp.	29	29	28.5	29	306,100
RFM Corp.	0.91	0.98	0.91	0.96	470,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57	58	56.5	58	150,300
San Miguel Corp. B	81	82.5	81	82.5	82,900
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	450,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	4,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	10,000,000
Ayala Corp.	7.2	7.5	7.2	7.3	2,294,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	50,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.7	4.75	4.65	4.7	287,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	1,500,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.14	2.16	2.14	2.14	570,000
APC Group Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.38	0.38	750,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	20,000,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	2,300
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.18	7,700,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.08	1.1	1.06	1.08	10,627,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.175	0.18	0.175	0.18	660,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.235	0.25	0.235	0.25	1,730,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.4	0.41	0.4	0.41	460,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	2.95	3.15	2.85	2.95	7,076,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.36	1.38	1.36	1.38	24,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	9	9.2	9	9.2	224,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	49	50	48.5	50	199,900
Global Equities Inc.	0.095	0.095	0.0925	0.095	300,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6	620,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.25	3.3	3.25	3.3	215,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.32	1.38	1.32	1.36	5,990,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.44	0.47	0.44	0.47	170,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.44	0.45	0.44	0.45	13,560,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.28	1,990,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	5,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.59	70,000
SM Investments Corp.	244	250	242	249	1,545,680
South China Resources Inc.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	180,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	5,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.215	0.18	0.205	45,210,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.52	1.8	1.52	1.8	235,000
Interphil Labs Inc. B	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	10,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	8	8	8	8	1,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	69,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.83	50,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.12	0.125	0.12	0.125	1,200,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.3	1.34	1.3	1.32	2,837,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1	1.02	1	1	341,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.56	1.62	1.56	1.62	8,760,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.3	0.3	680,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	14.5	15.25	14.5	15.25	337,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series O	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6.6	7	6.6	7	54,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.9	8.1	7.9	8	11,736,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	200,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.99	0.99	0.93	0.93	2,280,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.28	0.28	3,390,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.28	3,940,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.45	5,670,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.44	1.5	1.44	1.48	5,430,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	110,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	150,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	720,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.5	12,000
SM Development Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	50,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.4	7.7	7.4	7.7	2,406,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	20,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	92,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	40,000
Benguet Corp. A	8.6	8.7	8.6	8.7	20,000
Benguet Corp. B	27	27	27	27	15,500
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	4,880,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.35	10,360,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	23,700,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.02	0.021	0.02	0.021	72,700,000
Omico Corp.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	106,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.08	1.1	1.06	1.06	2,944,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.36	1.38	1.32	1.32	1,726,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	34	34	33	33	294,600
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	2,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	47,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	8,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	290,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.46	2.5	2.44	2.5	19,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.195	9,370,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.33	640,000

CURRENCIES

April 12, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.770891	1.000000	54.4660
Japan	Yen	0.007151	0.009276	0.5052
United Kingdom	Pound	1.457678	1.890900	102.9898
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098845	0.128222	6.9837
Switzerland	Franc	0.645908	0.837872	45.6355
Canada	Dollar	0.625165	0.810964	44.1700
Singapore	Dollar	0.467150	0.605987	33.0057
Australia	Dollar	0.597498	0.775074	42.2152
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.044858	2.652590	144.4760
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.205560	0.266652	14.5235
Brunei	Dollar	0.465739	0.604157	32.9060
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000081	0.000105	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.019452	0.025233	1.3743
UAE	Dirham	0.209897	0.272279	14.8299
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.297200	70.6533
Argentina	Peso	0.266745	0.346021	18.8464
Brazil	Real	0.299143	0.388048	21.1354
Denmark	Kroner	0.134257	0.174158	9.4857
India	Rupee	0.017681	0.022936	1.2492
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.202893	0.263193	14.3351
Mexico	New Peso	0.069467	0.090113	4.9081
New Zealand	Dollar	0.555197	0.720202	39.2265
Norway	Kroner	0.122092	0.158378	8.6262
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012993	0.016855	0.9180
South Africa	Rand	0.125191	0.162398	8.8452
Korea	Won	0.000759	0.000985	0.0536
Sweden	Kroner	0.109201	0.141655	7.7154
Syria	Pound	0.014850	0.019264	1.0492
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024423	0.031681	1.7255
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000359	0.000466	0.0254

Boracay booster

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

PRESIDENT Arroyo is scheduled to fly to Boracay tomorrow for an overnight trip to inaugurate a new Mirant power plant, in anticipation of the big boys joining the hotel boom in the world-famous island resort.

Unless she changes her mind, given the sensitivities of the still festering CAP issue, GMA is also scheduled to grace the groundbreaking for Fil Estate's Fairways and Bluewater 270-room "villatel" venture with McDonald's George Yang and MC Home Depot's Jose Chung.

Demand for 24/7 power on the island is expected to shoot up, given that Shangri-La, with Four Seasons tipped to follow, has also announced a 170-room and 50-villa hotel to open by mid-2007.

Also scheduled to fly in is Prudentialife Plans chair Francisco Alba, with his unnamed group of foreign investors, who wants to develop the 430-hectare beachfront property he has accumulated through the years in Nabas, Aklan, directly opposite the famed island.

The Nabas stretch reportedly has the same powdery white sand of Boracay, in addition to directly bordering the Caticlan airport.

Despite his Vatican misadventure, the short-lived diplomat has offered to donate whatever is needed by the government to extend the runway—Boracay's tipping point—so it could finally accommodate jumbo jets and directly connect with the international tourism grid.

Remembering Ted

THE URBAN Bank colleagues of Teodoro Borlongan are offering an 8 p.m. mass today at the Christ the King Church in Greenmeadows, where the body of the former bank president lies in state.

A scholarship fund in Borlongan's memory will also be launched.

Three is not a crowd

JWT vice chair Matt Seddon wrote to deny a Monday item here claiming that the advertising agency had been hit by a "mass exodus" of account management and creative personnel servicing the bread-and-butter Unilever brands.

(Cocktales has obtained the names of three JWT staffers out of the alleged group of 12 who handed in their resignations one after the other.)

"In the interest of journalistic integrity, I would have expected someone from your department to have called me for comment before damaging accusations are made about the agency in general and me personally," Seddon said. "Particularly, when I am reliably informed that your source is a senior creative figure at one of our key competitors."

Money-go-round

- BAR topnotcher January Sanchez has become the fifth top placer to have joined the ACCRA law firm, the others being founders Manuel Abello and Avelino Cruz, and Patricia-Ann Prodigalidad and Edwin Enrile.
- SECURITIES and construction trader Francis Chua has been elected president of the 2005-2007 board of Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, along with John Tan (executive vice president), Tan Tian Siong, Henry Ah, Alfonso Siy, Alfonso Uy, Henry Limbonliong, Tan Ching (vice presidents), Angel Ngu (treasurer), Elpidio Duca (auditor), and Jose Ngaw (secretary-general/corporate secretary).
- CHOWKING founder Robert Kuan is set to join the Henry Sy representatives in the Chinabank board and replace ICBC nominee Donato Faylona.

Heard through the grapevine

MARUBENI and Sumitomo are engaged in a proxy war with congressmen and ex-generals as front men over the much-delayed LRT 1 modernization project. Sumitomo won the rebid, at the expense of first-round winner Marubeni.

The project is being funded by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, which is getting exasperated over what appears now to be a trademark Filipino urong-sulong way of conducting business.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Oil firms hint . . .

From page B1

every Opec announcement of an increase in output.

Starting April 1, Opec's production quota hit 27.5 million barrels a day, with the possibility of another increase of 500,000 barrels a day should the situation call for it.

Even with the extremely high oil prices in the world market, however, demand remained high, even rising lately due to the prolonged winter in Europe and the northeastern part of the United States.

For the past six weeks, local oil firms have been jacking up the prices of their gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter almost every week.

The last pump price increase was implemented on the last day of March, the fifth that month.

Since the start of the year, gasoline prices have gone up six times by a total of P3.10 a liter, while prices of diesel fuel have increased seven times by a total of P3.30 a liter. Martinez said it was difficult for oil firms to continue absorbing the spikes in world oil prices as these had adverse effects on the firms' finances.

"We're no longer making any money," he said.

Shares rise 1.64%

From page B1

passes the legislation to increase VAT to 12 from 10 percent to help avoid a looming fiscal crisis.

"The question in everyone's mind right now is—is this rally sustainable?'" said Gomer Tan of Regina Capital Development Corp.

SM Investments was the most actively traded stock, up P5 to P249, continuing to recover ground lost since listing at P250.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone was the second most active, up P15 to P1,400.

Ayala Land Inc. rose 40 centavos to P8 while parent Ayala Corp. gained 10 centavos to P7.30.

Globe Telecom was up P10 to P845 while Bank of the Philippine Islands gained 50 centavos to P50.50. *AFP*

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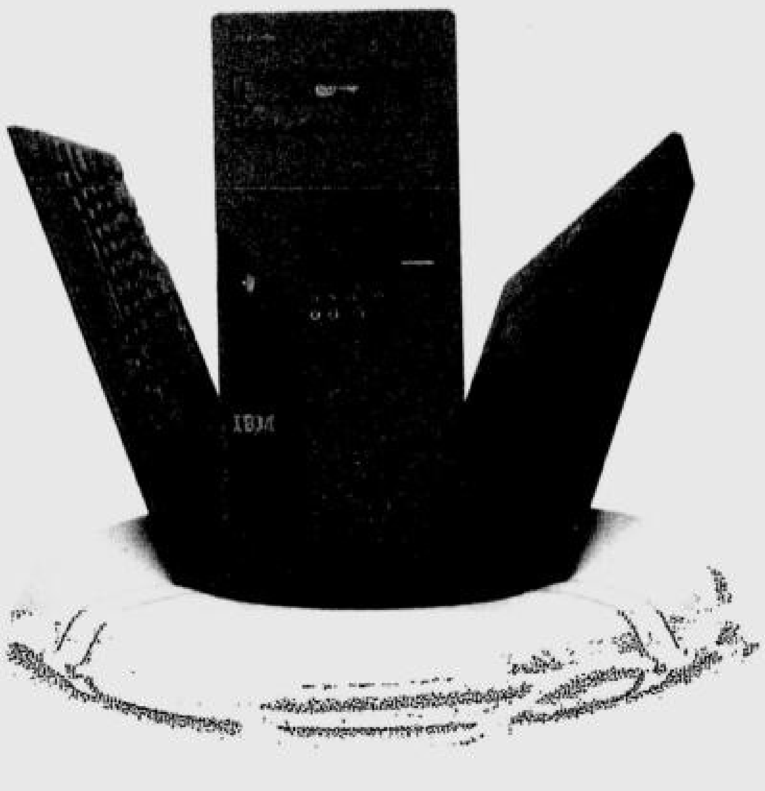

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Market buys up 20-yr T-bonds; rate drops to 12.125 percent

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COST of the government's 20-year borrowing has significantly dropped to 12.125 percent yesterday, as investors scrambled for the long-term Treasury bond in anticipation of further decline in interest rates.

The new rate for the 20-year T-bond was 162.5 basis points lower than the 13.37 percent recorded in November 2004, when the long-term government security was last auctioned off.

The market showed strong appetite for the 20-year T-bond, as bids reached P10.0521 billion compared with the government's debt offering of only P4.5 billion.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz explained that the positive response of the long-term government security market, composed mostly of insurance companies, was due to very high liquidity and expectations that interest rates would go down in the months ahead.

Cruz said the Treasury would open a tap facility today to accommodate investors whose bids were rejected yesterday. The Treasury would offer P1 billion worth of the 2-year T-bond at 12.005 percent today through the facility, which allows investors to avail themselves of government securities over the counter but at a lower interest rate.

The bellwether 91-day T-bill rate climbed to 6.685 percent, or nine basis points higher than the 6.595 percent recorded last week The rate for the 182-day T-bill inched up to 7.99 percent, or 15.9 bps higher than the previous week's 7.831 percent.

The treasurer said the positive response of the market to the 20-year debt offering of the government indicated that the T-bills next week could perform just as well.

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Banks to mull over MWSI sale to DMCI

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE METROPOLITAN Waterworks and Sewerage System and Maynilad Water Services Inc. will seek the approval of the concessionaire's creditor-banks before they proceed with the sale of the Lopez Group's majority stake in the west concessionaire to DMCI Holdings Inc.

Maynilad sources said this would be the company's next move as DMCI Holdings firmed up its proposal to acquire 59 percent of the Lopez Group's subsidiary.

Maynilad's bank creditors include the Development Bank of the Philippines, the Equitable-PCI Bank, the Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. and the East-West Bank.

The company's other creditors, with whom it has some P10 billion worth of obligations, are Credit Agricole, Indosuez Merchant Bank Asia Ltd., Citibank NA, Barclays Bank PLC and BNP Paribas.

Maynilad sources said that officials of the west zone concessionaire made a presentation to DMCI officials last Monday regarding the company's current operations and capital expenditure program.

Designated court receiver lawyer Rosario S. Bernaldo told the INQUIRER in a separate interview that Maynilad's current negotiations with DMCI would not affect the pending corporate rehabilitation program.

"The coming of any new investors to Maynilad is welcome and even favorable at this point because it would hasten the corporate rehabilitation of the company," Bernaldo yesterday said. "The problem [now] is the time constraint because we are about to ... meet the deadline set by the court."

Bernaldo said that they were putting the finishing touches on the final rehabilitation plan that would include all the recommendations of the creditor-banks. The plan will be submitted to the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 90 on April 29.

According to Bernaldo, they can no longer ask for a court extension in order to prolong the drafting of the rehabilitation plan because they will exceed what is allowed by law, which is 180 days.

"If the time allotted for us to draft a final rehabilitation plan is not met ... the stay order for the banks not to collect from Maynilad will be pursued," she said.

All systems go for First Gen's P3-B bond issue

THE LOPEZES' First Generation Holdings Corp. has firmed up the issuance of at least P3 billion worth of peso bonds, its very first local currency debt offering, before the end of this month.

Eduardo Francisco, executive vice president of BDO Capital and Investment Corp. which acts as joint lead manager with ING Bank N.V., yesterday said in an interview that the issuance had already obtained a triple-A rating from Philippine Ratings Corp.

The peso bonds, which shall have a term of five years, would be launched before the end of April, Francisco said.

The offering has already attracted strong investor interest, he added.

"First Gen has a very strong cash flow and it is one of the premier power generation companies in the country," Francisco said.

The company is the largest Filipino-owned power generation firm in the country. It is also planning to conduct an initial public offering at the Philippine Stock Exchange this year.

Francisco explained it made sense for strong local companies to issue peso bonds now to avoid constraints from banks' single borrower's limit. Even if a company was in good position, he said, the SBL limit would limit the amount it could borrow from the banking system.

First Gen plans to use the proceeds from the bond for general corporate purposes which may include acquisitions.

First Gen is 88.44 percent First Philippine Holdings Corp. The balance is held by AIDEC (7.75 percent), and Sumitomo (3.81 percent), one of the largest trading companies in Japan.

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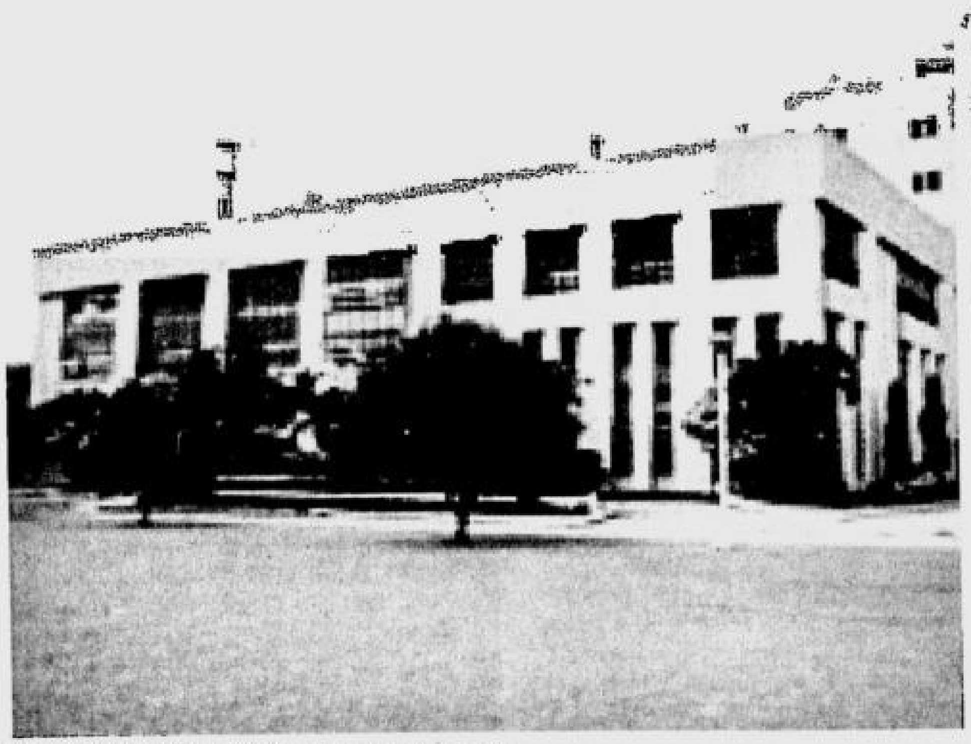

THE ASIA Brewery facility in Cabuyao, Laguna.

Asia Brewery enjoys a good challenge

By Michelle V. Remo

MICHAEL TAN

IT IS sporting of Asia Brewery Inc. (ABI) to consider that its No. 2 ranking is nothing more than an exciting challenge.

"We are just letting the challenge be ... we enjoy being the challenger," said Michael Tan, son of tycoon Lucio Tan and chief operating officer of ABI.

The second-largest beverage company in the country has no reason to obsess over becoming No. 1. Considering the country's enormous beer market, there is more than enough profit to go around.

Last year alone, ABI increased its gross sales by 20 percent to around P6 billion.

ABI has adopted the principle of calmness in spite of the cutthroat competition in the beer business. The beverage firm is also focusing on continually developing its products to become a strong market player. In doing so, the firm believes that all good things—even the lead spot—will come its way in time.

Focus

The aggressive drive to reach the top spot, which has been enjoyed for some time now by San Miguel Corp., does not appeal to Tan. He considers the non-aggressive tack to be a wise business strategy.

Increasing its presence in the beverage market by developing new products, while maintaining strong patronage of its old brands, has been ABI's approach to profitability.

Known for its beer products like Beer Na Beer, Colt 45, Lone Star and Carlsberg, ABI intends to make its presence felt stronger in the soft drinks and bottled-water markets.

Last year, ABI launched Virgin Cola and Summit Clear—the flavored, carbonated water. It is the marketing of these two new products that ABI will focus on in 2005.

Tan in an interview admits that while 2004 has been a good year for ABI, 2005 may not be as promising because of the enactment last January of the sin tax law, raising the excise tax on cigarettes and alcohol.

Decline

Tan said that based on past experiences, the company recorded declines in sales growth during the years when a tax hike was implemented.

The increase in operation costs, such as that of packaging, compounded with the hike in the excise tax, will also affect the company's bottomline.

Tan said that the increase in the cost of plastics alone, by 60 to 100 percent, would substantially hurt ABI's revenues.

"Early last year, PET (plastic used for packaging bottled water) only cost $700 per metric ton; now it's at $1,200, representing a 71-percent price increase," he said.

To compensate for the possible revenue loss, ABI is pinning its hopes on its new soft drink and bottled water products.

Bigger than beer

"What we are focusing on is to become holistic in the beverage business," Tan said. "Since we already have beer and hard liquor (through sister company Tanduay), we should also be in the soft drinks and bottled water industries."

Tan said the soft drinks market, which he said is much bigger than that of beer, offers a lot of profit opportunities for ABI, considering that there have been only two key players—Coke and Pepsi.

He says there is enough room for additional brands. While the two popular brands target the high-end market, Virgin Cola has the lower-end market as its niche.

Virgin Cola has an edge in its price, Tan says. An 8-ounce bottle of Virgin costs P5.50, or lower than the P7 to P8 price of Pepsi or Coke.

As Virgin Cola's is still in its rollout phase this year, Tan says ABI is in no hurry to see the maximum revenue potential of the new soft drink brand.

Getting the hang of Virgin

He says the company will still let the market get the hang of Virgin, and that ABI is targeting to get a humble one percent slice of the P50-billion domestic soft drinks market this year.

The target of earning at least P500 million from Virgin Cola will be supported by the strategy of offering the soft drink in different packages. Tan said that aside from the recently introduced 8-ounce glass bottle, Virgin would also come in 800-ml (family size) glass bottle, in cans, and in PET bottles.

For its bottled water business, ABI expects competition to be stiffer this year compared with last year. This is because of an increasing number of players, partly due to the fact that some refilling stations are now bottling their own brands of water.

But with Summit Clear, the wonder carbonated and flavored water, ABI expects to still generate healthy revenues from the bottled water segment. Of the estimated P6 billion in gross sales of ABI last year, bottled water accounted for P1 billion.

Summit Clear has six flavors: tangerine lime, apple pear, white grape, black cherry, peach, and strawberry watermelon. Besides Summit Clear, ABI also produces Summit and Absolut bottled waters.

Single-digit growth

Aside from promoting its new brands, ABI will likewise focus on its beer business. Tan said the company would be happy with a single-digit growth for beer because of the increase in the excise tax.

According to Tan, ABI has no plans of expanding abroad just yet. He says the company already has its hands full this year.

"For now, we will focus on letting our brands gain strength first in the domestic market," he said.

Tan said ABI has received informal offers of investing into beverage firms in neighboring countries in Asia.

Rush to be No. 1

But he said ABI knows the time is not yet right for the company to expand abroad.

While expanding offshore is an ideal goal for ABI, the company prefers to plan things one step at a time.

ABI sees the benefit of carefully planning each and every step of growing the business, Tan said.

The rush to become No. 1 may just ruin it for them.

GMA Pinoy TV seen to start airing in US soon

By Clarissa S. Batino

GMA Pinoy TV, the international channel of GMA Network Inc., is set to debut in San Francisco, United States between May and July this year.

The move is aimed at expanding its market by tapping the Filipino audience overseas.

GMA's international channel is now being shown in Japan and Guam.

Jimmy Duavit, GMA executive vice president and chief operating officer, said GMA Pinoy Tv would be launched in other overseas markets— such as Singapore, Malaysia and the Middle East—in the first semester of next year

The network spent about $4 million to upgrade its facilities in preparation for the international operations. Duavit said another $1 million was earmarked for marketing and promotions, admitting that GMA had a lot of catching up to do in the international arena.

In 2004, GMA posted a net profit of P1.5 billion, which was 42 percent higher than the previous year's level, while rival ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. suffered a 25-percent drop in its net income to P758 million.

Early indications showed, according to Duavit, GMA 7 registered a significant increase in its profit in the first quarter of the year. He said January and February showed strong results.

"The intention is to go where there is a critical mass of Filipino audience abroad," said Duavit in an interview. There are more than eight million Filipinos working overseas.

GMA Pinoy TV carries most of the network's highest-rating shows, including news and public affairs and general entertainment programs.

The international channel line-up includes 24 Oras, Eat Bulaga, Bubble Gang; Mulawin, Imbestigador; and S.O.P.

GMA is using the satellite facilities of Malaysian firm Measat Satellite Systems Sdn. Bhd. to support the network's international operations. Duavit said GMA Pinoy TV was being carried on Measat-2 spacecraft.

"The signal is down-linked at the new Measat Teleport and Broadcast Center in Kuala Lumpur, re-transmitted via fiber optic to the United States where it would be uploaded again to a satellite before GMA Pinoy TV would be distributed to cable and satellite operators in the US," explained Duavit.

In the US, GMA had tied up with a major cable operator that would distribute GMA Pinoy TV initially in San Francisco.

Gov't urged to correct trade policy blunders

THE MULTI-SECTORAL Fair Trade Alliance (FTA), a coalition pushing for trade and economic reforms, urged the government to ensure a level playing field for local industries in the on-going trade and tariff policy review.

Wigberto Tañada, lead convenor of FTA, said the Philippine government should take advantage of this opportunity to correct its previous haphazard trade liberalization and tariff policies.

Tañada said the Constitution clearly mandates a pro-Filipino stance in trade policies, "The only problem is that, we chose to hastily expose our industries to the goods of the world eagerly looking for vulnerable markets, thinking that we are favoring consumers by making goods cheap and abundant."

He calls the government to take the initiative and set things right, explaining "all these would also be within the WTO rules and practice."

Tañada recalled the time when the era of liberalization was launched in the late '80s, he fought hard against it because it would definitely harm all local industries, considering their level of development and competitiveness.

Tañada further recalled the decision of the Supreme Court in the Tañada vs. Angara case, where the SC proclaimed that the WTO recognized the different conditions of developing countries and, thus had set provisions for "safety nets" or safeguard measures to provide temporary protection to their industries suffering injury.

Tañada hopes the government will undertake corrective measures by stopping further liberalization and reorienting current trade policies to provide more protection to agriculture and industry.

SBC, Robinson's forge property dev't partnership

SECURITY Bank Corp. recently signed a joint venture agreement with Robinson's Homes Inc. to develop and sell the bank's 10.5-hectare prime property in Lanang, Davao City into an upscale residential-commercial subdivision.

RHI will put in the necessary investment to develop and market this prime property located between the new Davao International Airport and the main urban center. The posh enclave will offer a combination of commercial and residential lots averaging 200-300 square meters in size. Architectural group Palafox and Associates drew up the master plan.

SBC president Alberto S. Villarosa said, "We could not have found a better and more committed partner than RHI to develop and sell the bank's prime property. This joint project is only the beginning of an equally productive endeavor together."

Villarosa also commended the cooperative efforts of the property management team of the bank, including Security Bank executive committee chair Rafael Simpao Jr., who was instrumental in crafting this innovative property partnership along with first vice president Evylene C. Sison, and Security Land Corp. vice president Richard T. Yu.

Robinson's Homes Inc. signatories were president Lance Gokongwei, executive vice President Frederick Go, senior vice president and general manager Marilu M. Alferez and vice president Manuel D. Deus.

SM tops corporate governance survey

SM Prime Holdings Inc., the country's leading shopping mall developer and operator, was cited the best in corporate governance in the Philippines by the 2004 Asset Benchmark Research.

SM Prime bested top Philippine corporations in this survey that covered 110 international institutions investing in Asian equity markets. Each investor was tasked to nominate six companies demonstrating exemplary corporate governance, reinforcing the general view that measures for better corporate governance have been persistently undertaken and enhanced across the region.

"While standards of corporate governance had continued to improve, investors were more than ever cautious to nominate individual companies," said writer Anuja Aggarwal in the March 2005 issue of the Asset Benchmark Research.

He adds, "Asia has a lot of catching up to do. The Western countries, despite their headline fiascos, have a more engaged marketplace when it comes to corporate governance."

SM Prime was also cited by the AsiaMoney Magazine as the Overall Best Managed Company in the Philippines in its anniversary issue "Poll of Polls."

AsiaMoney placed SM Prime at the top of the ranks, alongside Sun Hung Kai Properties of Hong Kong, with 134 points. The "Poll of Polls" is a summary of AsiaMoney's Poll winners since 1991.

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BSP probes bank charges on dormant deposits

By Doris C. Dumlao

AFTER probing the automated teller machine (ATM) charges imposed by banks, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said it would next look into the fees imposed on dormant deposit accounts which depositors found exorbitant.

In an interview, a ranking BSP official said the institution, which earlier announced plans to impose tighter disclosure regulations on ATMs, saw the need to also focus on the various charges on deposit accounts.

The official said the BSP was being swamped with complaints not just about the ATM fees but also about charges on inactive deposit accounts.

Dormancy charges are automatically deducted from deposit accounts when no transaction is made after a certain period of time, usually two years.

The official admitted that the BSP could not intervene on market pricing, but said it could help the customers by forcing banks to be more transparent on the different charges they impose on their depositors, including dormancy charges.

"The charges should be clear and depositors should be updated," the official said.

Customers complain that dormancy fees are among the "hidden charges" that eat up on their hard-earned savings.

Based on fees and charges published by four of the country's biggest banks in their respective websites, dormancy fees cost a depositor P100 to P200 per month.

Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., the country's biggest bank, charges P100 per month for inactive deposits, except accounts worth P100,000 and above.

Second biggest lender Bank of the Philippine Islands also charges P100 a month for dormant peso deposit accounts and $5/month for dollar deposit accounts.

Philippine National Bank and Union Bank of the Philippines charge P200 per month after two years of inactivity.

The BSP is already preparing a new circular requiring banks to post their ATM charges right on the screen of the machines so that clients would not be surprised with the deductions made by the banks per transaction.

The official said the BSP was focusing on three areas of customer complaints—ATMs, dormancy charges and credit cards.

The BSP earlier issued tougher guidelines on credit card operations last year and with this already taken cared of, the regulator vowed to focus on the remaining two areas.

BCII plans to buy steam plant

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

HOLDING firm Bacnotan Consolidated Industries Inc. (BCII), the flagship company of the Phinma Group, is considering buying one of the government's major geothermal plants.

The company, through its 25-percent owned subsidiary Trans Asia Oil (TA Oil), is looking at three of National Power Corp. plants that will be sold in line with the agency's privatization program.

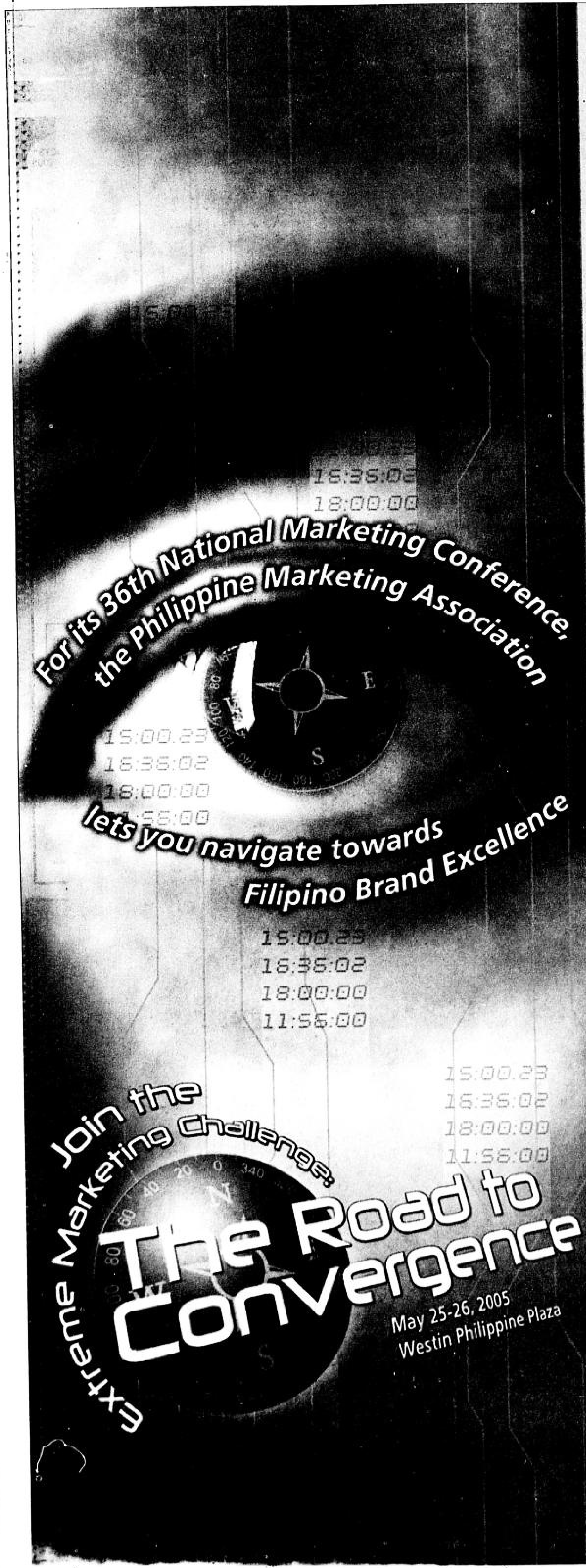
These are the 193-megawatt Palinpinon power plant in Negros Oriental, the 150-MW plant at the Bacon-Manito (Bacman) area in Sorsogon, and the 275-MW plant in Tiwi, Albay.

TA Oil and its subsidiary TA Power—which are the Phinma Group's vehicles for its power investments—currently operate a 53-MW plant for Holcim Philippines Inc. and had just completed a 3.4-MW power plant to serve the island of Guimaras.

"BCII and the Phinma Group are enthusiastically looking at opportunities arising from the restructuring and privatization of Napocor, focusing mainly on possible participation in geothermal power plants," Phinma president and BCII president Ramon del Rosario Jr. said.

Excluding the planned investments in power projects, BCII is earmarking P350-P500 million for investments this year. The company raised P5.9 billion from the sale of its cement assets.

The holding firm, which is re-engineering itself to be a major player in the services sector, is gearing up for possible investments in education, medical services, hotel operation and housing.



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Samsung sees bigger share of printer market

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE LOCAL unit of Korean electronic giant Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. expects to corner about 30 percent of the Philippine laser printer market.

Officials of Samsung Electronics Philippines Corp. announced this projection during the launch of the company's new printers at the Edsa Shangri-la Hotel in Mandaluyong City yesterday.

Only about half a year after joining the local industry, the company was already able to corner 12 percent of the market.

Hyuck Jae Shim, Sepco president and chief executive, said the company started in the market in the last quarter of 2004. He said it was aiming at cornering a significant part of the market by focusing on the corporate segment.

Shim said corporate buyers made up 80 percent of the local laser printer market, with the rest made up of personal and home users.

Jimmy Go, president of Samsung printers distributor MSI Digiland, expressed surprise with the market's warm response to Samsung printers.

"Samsung printers went up to the No. 2 spot (after HP) in less than six months," Go said. "We were selling between 400 and 500 units a month."

He said his company was embarking on programs, activities and other incentives for consumers to widen its market.

According to Sepco's prepared statement, its latest array of laser printers would "suit your hectic and tech-friendly lifestyle" with models that churn out copies faster and with better quality.

Seoul-based Samsung Electronics, the Samsung group's flagship unit, is one of the world's largest microchip makers. The company makes various consumer devices including DVD players, big-screen televisions and digital cameras; and home devices like microwave ovens, refrigerators, air-conditioners and washing machines.

Samsung Electronics also makes computers, color monitors, LCD panels and printers. It also churns out semiconductors such as DRAMs, SRAMs and flash memory as well as communications devices such as mobile phone and networking switches.

Fiscal reform expert to speak at Zobel lecture

GOVERNMENT reform expert David Osborne, author of the 1992 New York Times best seller "The Price of Government" and managing partner of The Public Strategies Group, will speak at the Enrique Zobel Lecture on April 21 at the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Intercontinental Manila from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

This will be the second lecture organized by the E. Zobel Foundation Inc., which first brought into the country Alvin Toffler, author of best sellers "Power Shift" and "The Third Wave" and one of the world's best-known futurists and social thinkers.

In the "Price of Government," Osborne questioned traditional budget making, challenged governments to put price tags on their services and asked their citizens if they were willing to foot the bill. This way, government will be forced to justify its budget spending with improvement in basic services while competing with the private sector for every tax cent of its citizens.

The panel of reactors at the lecture are Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Tarlac Rep. Gilberto Teodoro Jr., Makati Business Club executive director Guillermo Luz, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, and former Press Sectary and presidential spokesperson Ricardo Puno Jr.

The Enrique Zobel lecture is presented by San Miguel Corp. and sponsored by Ayala Corp, Philippine Airlines, SM Prime Holdings Corp., Goodwill Bookstore, Hotel Intercontinental Manila, Insular Life Assurance Co. Ltd., Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., BusinessWorld, Philippine Daily Inquirer, The Coca-Cola Export Corp., Pilipinas Shell Foundation, and the Andres Soriano Foundation.

Stocks weaken as dollar dips ahead of US trade data

SINGAPORE—The dollar yesterday slipped ahead of data that was expected to show a near-record US trade deficit, and weakness on Wall Street weighed on Asian share markets as investors braced for earnings.

European stocks were set for a mixed start after oil prices bounced back above $53 a barrel. Spread betters in London called the FTSE 100, CAC-40, and DAX indexes between 7 points up and 7 points down.

Japan's Nikkei average fell 0.64 percent to 11,670.30.

Traders said weakness in US markets undermined the appetite for exporters such as Sony Corp., which fell 1.8 percent.

"From a technical point of view, I think US stocks should start rising shortly," said Yasuo Ueki, market analyst at consultancy Poko Financial Office. "But investors probably don't want to start buying (Japanese) stocks until they actually see such a rise."

"On top of worries about the US market, we have the corporate earnings season starting soon, and that's also making investors cautious from buying large-cap tech stocks."

MSCI's index of non-Japan Asian share markets rose 0.25 percent, helped by slight gains in Hong Kong, Australia and Taiwan.

Stocks in Singapore and South Korea were down by about 0.4 percent each.

US blue-chip stocks and the Nasdaq inched lower on Monday after a profit warning from Ford Motor Co. Apple Computer Inc., maker of the iPod digital music players and Macintosh computers, fell 4.2 percent, ahead of second-quarter results on Wednesday.

The dollar edged down to a one-week low against the yen ahead of US figures that are forecast to show the February trade deficit was $59 billion—the second-biggest monthly shortfall on record after November's $59.4 billion deficit.

But traders said the data was unlikely to keep the market's attention on the huge US current account and budget deficits for long, and that the dollar would stay supported on expectations for higher US interest rates.

Clues on rates could come from minutes from the Federal Reserve's March policy meeting.

The dollar traded at around 107.60 yen close to its lowest level since April 1, and down from 107.86 yen in late US trade on Monday.

The euro was little changed at $1.2989 after touching a high of $1.3004 on Monday.

Copper futures traded to a record high of $3,330 a ton in Asia, supported by tight supplies in China, according to metals traders.

The London Metal Exchange (LME) three-month copper was quoted at $3,322.

Spot gold was trading around $428.90 an ounce versus $428.25 in New York, near a three-week high of $429.10 an ounce hit on Monday on the dollar's weakness. *Reuters*

Oil prices seen to steady; Opec at odds over output

SINGAPORE—Oil prices yesterday edged higher, building on tentative gains as Opec members appeared at odds over whether to boost production now that prices have eased below the cartel's $55-a-barrel threshold.

Despite a growing divide over policy, cartel powerhouse Saudi Arabia told customers in Asia that it would boost supplies next month, attempting to keep a lid on still high prices.

US light crude traded up 6 cents to $53.77 a barrel, building on Monday's 39-cent rise that ended a week-long losing streak.

Prices are down nearly 8 percent from last week's all-time high of $58.28. But some dealers said growing worries about US gasoline supply and uncertainty over Opec policy may staunch further losses.

"We could be at the end of the correction phase," said Keiichi Sano of Sumitomo Corp.'s commodities business unit in Tokyo. "In this market, everyone wants to buy the dips."

Opec president Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahd al-Sabah said on Monday the group was on track to boost supplies by 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) next month, but dissent was emerging from other members over whether a second output increase was warranted.

"I think that at the current (price) level there is no need to activate the second tranche," Nigeria's Presidential Adviser on Petroleum and Energy Edmund Daukoru told reporters.

Opec raised output limits by 500,000 bpd in March to 27.5 million in a bid to cool prices and left room for a second increase before a June meeting if prices failed to drop below $55.

Algerian energy minister Chakib Khelil said over the weekend he saw no reason for Opec to boost production as the market was well-supplied—a view seconded by the head of the International Energy Agency, the west's adviser on oil.

"I do not see the huge need for additional oil," executive director Claude Mandil said on Monday.

But Saudi Arabia and fellow Middle East Gulf producers are keen to boost output now to encourage stockbuilding in the coming months, creating a buffer for strong demand later this year.

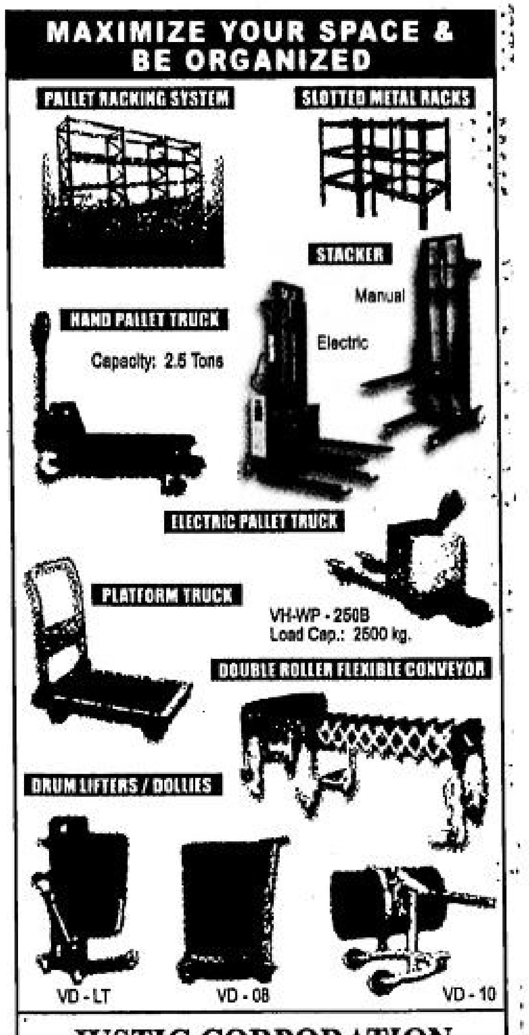
Saudi Arabia, the only Opec producer with any significant capacity left in its system, told key Asian buyers it was boosting May supplies to 100 percent of contractual volumes, a rise of 10 percentage points from April, market sources said.

That could translate into at least 300,000 bpd of fresh oil for the market next month, given that state firm Saudi Aramco sells about 3 million bpd to major Asian customers.

Despite the extra oil, the market is growing increasingly anxious about the state of US gasoline inventories, which have been declining ahead of peak summer demand as oil refiners globally operate near their limits.

US gasoline demand this summer is expected to be up 1.8 percent from last year, the US government said last week.

US crude oil inventories, already at the highest level in almost three years, are expected to have risen 400,000 barrels. *Reuters*



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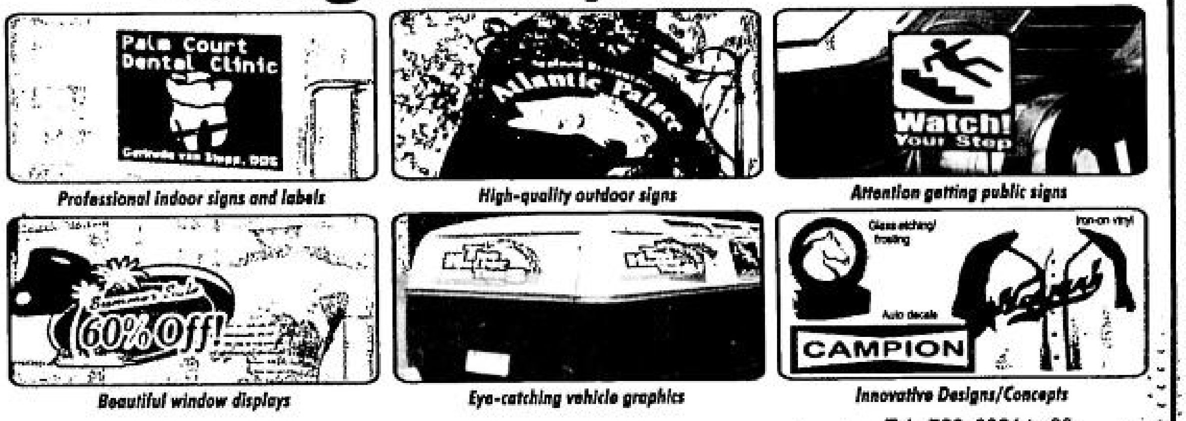

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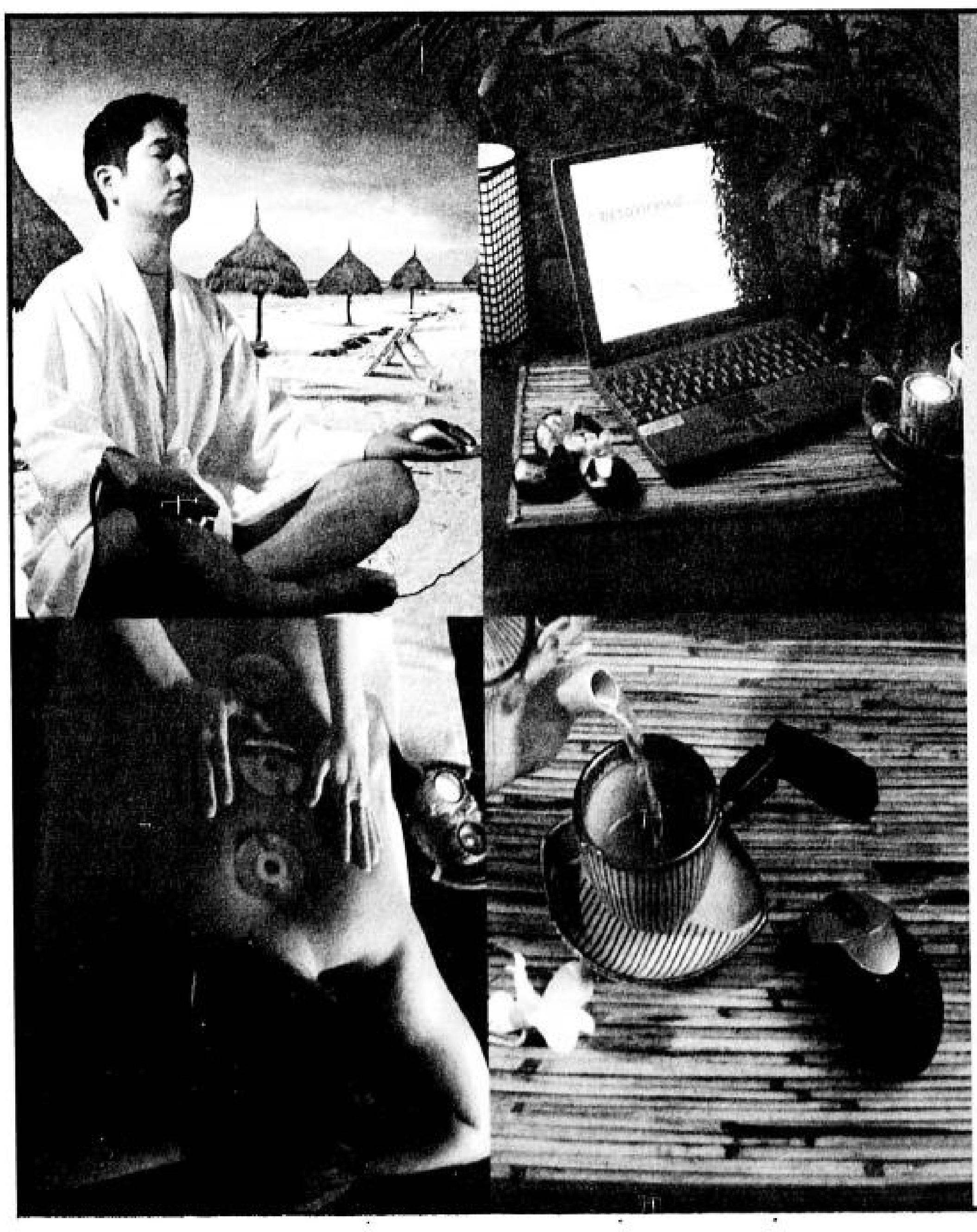

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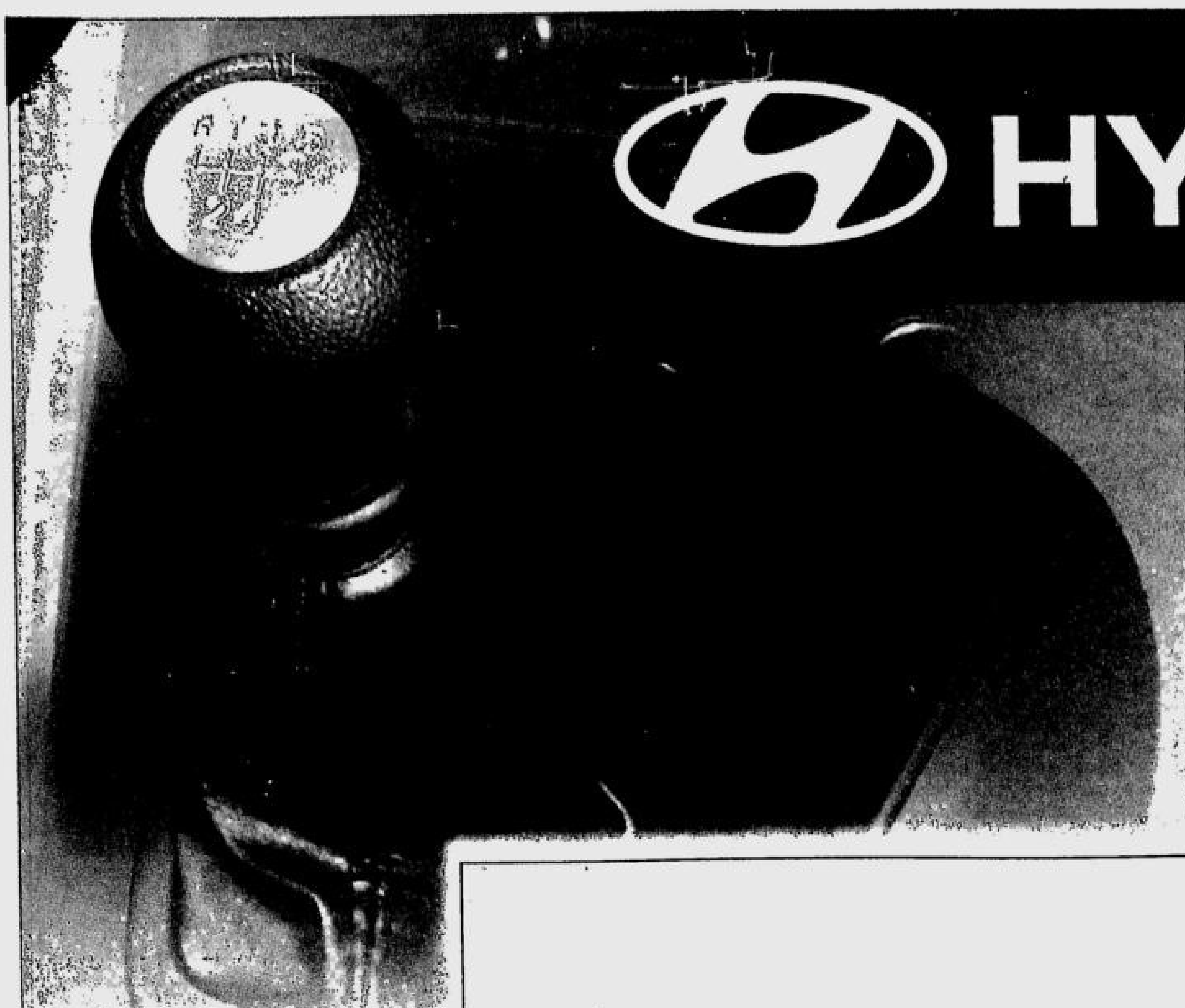


What powers the Matrix?

The Hyundai Matrix redefines the essence of the MPV. With spacious cargo and passenger space, loaded with safety and comfort features, and eye-catching Euro-inspired exterior design, the Hyundai Matrix seems to have it all. But this multi-purpose vehicle has become even more practical with the introduction of the Matrix CRDi!

Powered by Hyundai's breakthrough CRDi diesel technology, the Matrix offers motorists up to 25.1km/liter on long drives. Even during city driving, the Matrix CRDi diesel mileage is very remarkable as well. Owners can expect that the new Matrix CRDi is indeed a "more practical vehicle" with maintenance and fuel spending cut down to a minimum.

Hyundai gears up to take on the world automotive makers top 5 rankings! A popular name amongst motorists around the world, Hyundai sets its eyes on reaching top rankings this millennium. Currently building a strong foothold in the local automotive market scene with the success of their Starex vans, Hyundai Asia Resources, Inc. (HARI), exclusive distributor for Hyundai Motor Company (HMC), continue to savor increasing market share and commendations from top-notched car groups.

Starex shines through

In 2004, Car Awards Group awarded the Hyundai the distinction of Car of the Year in its category awards as Best Van - People Carrier of the Year. The Starex bested its competitors in the same category in the road and driving tests conducted by CAGI. Factors that made the Starex stand out against the competition during the COTY tests proceedings were the expansive cargo room, high-power and performance gasoline and diesel-propelled engines, high and airy passenger space and luxuriously comfortable passenger features. 2004 also proved successful for the Starex in terms of sales according CAMPI reports. The Starex ranked no.1 in their sales for the van category.

And even this early in the year, the Starex is a resounding name that comes into mind when it comes to vans. Proving how much of an impact it has made in the local industry. Part of the appeal that makes the Starex charming is its CRDi engine.

The CRDi, a new system now found in the Hyundai Starex, Matrix and Tucson, combines the torque power of diesel and the smooth riding feel of gasoline. Hyundai CRDi diesel engine's capability evenly distributes precise amounts of fuel per combustion chamber, monitored by an electronic control to achieve optimum fuel efficiency, minimal fume emission and less engine wear and tear. Thus, the CRDi not only improves engine performance, it also helps lessen maintenance, and fuel expenses. At a time when gasoline prices continue to skyrocket, it's a good thing Hyundai has a solution.

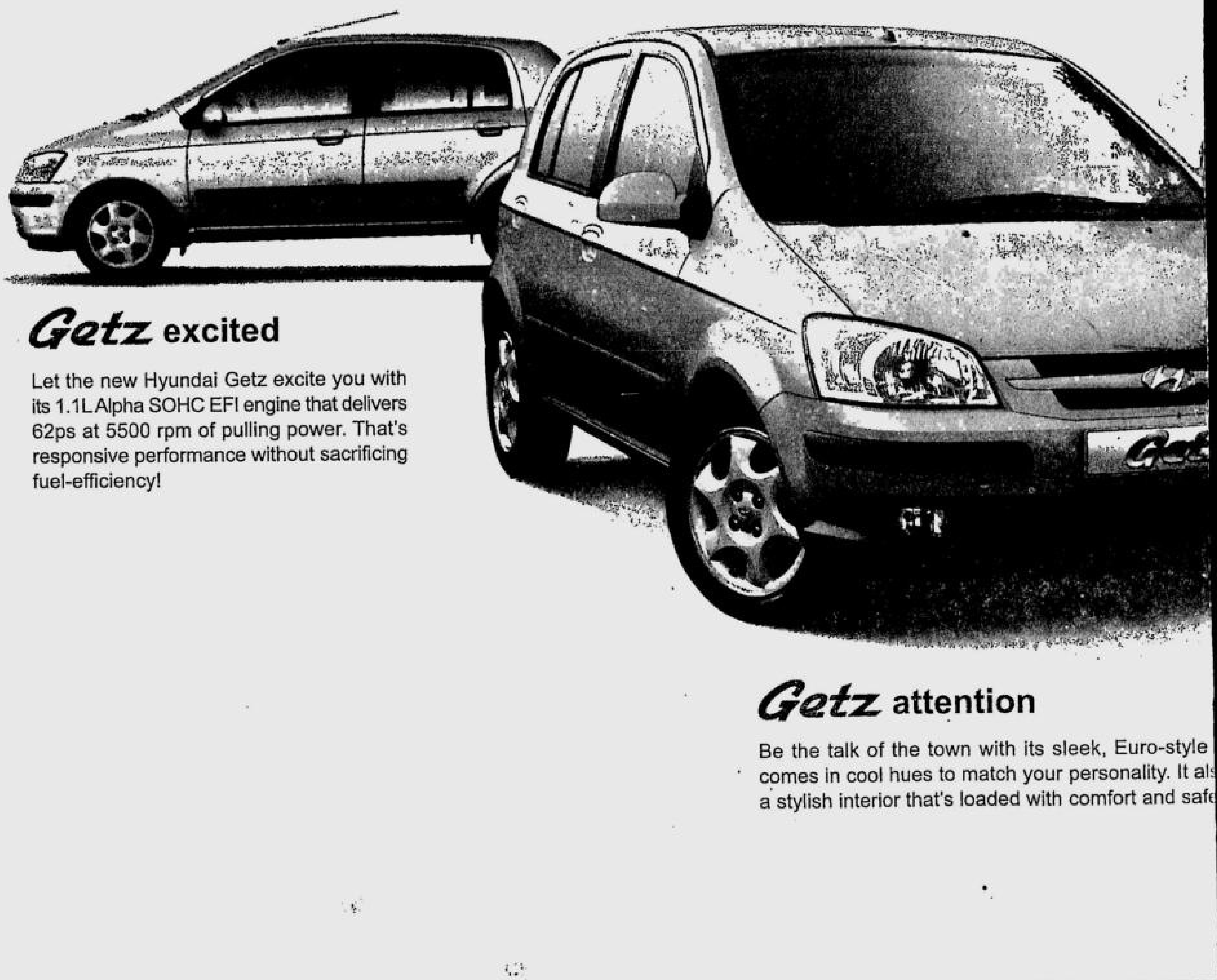
Gearing Up at the Fort

Hyundai recently rocked the country's car industry with the unveiling of three new lifestyle vehicles at the Fort.

HYUNDAI G3AR UP! Fitfully titled, was the event recently held at the Fort that launched the Getz, Tucson and Sonata to a roaring crowd. It was a celebration of Hyundai's continuous growth in the country. With Paolo Bediones hosting the evening, there was no sign of letting up as the night was filled with ecstatic energy and revelry attended by many big names from the government and motoring journalists and enthusiasts.

Everyone from politicians to top caliber columnists and businessmen were able to behold the new vehicles as a testament to the idea that impossible is now attainable. Sit back, relax. There is more to come from Hyundai.

Getz everyt



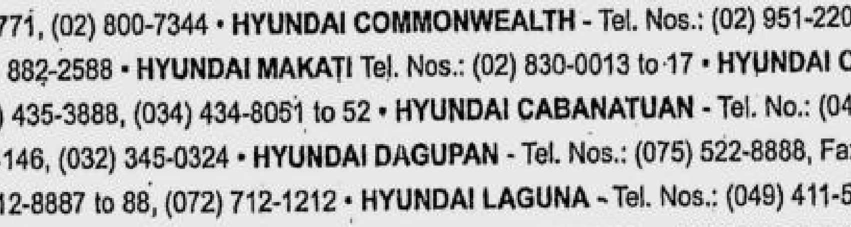
Getz excited

Let the new Hyundai Getz excite you with its 1.1L Alpha SOHC EFI engine that delivers 62ps at 5500 rpm of pulling power. That's responsive performance without sacrificing fuel-efficiency!

Getz attention

Be the talk of the town with its sleek, Euro-style
comes in cool hues to match your personality. It al
a stylish interior that's loaded with comfort and saf

Designed to seat 5 passengers



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Let the Getz, give you the ride of a lifetime with its 1.1L SOHC EFI engine with 62ps at 5500rpm of pulling power. It also comes in a 1.3L engine variety with Automatic Transmission.

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Combining fury and flare, all in one 4WD SUV, welcome the Hyundai Tucson. Modern styling and design make the Tucson a dominating force on the road whether in the heart of the city or, the jungle. Long outdoor treks demand a certain kind of drive, stamina, power and personality, all of which is in the Tucson. Through the magic of Space Wizardry, fold-up the seats and turn your SUV to a comfortable sleeping space or create extra cargo space.

Teeming with comfort and safety features, the Tucson's dynamic torque management system ushers in a new level of control by automatically adjusting engine torque for optimum control. Combined with an Anti-lock Braking System, the Tucson gives you better control on any road.

At the core of this vehicle is Hyundai's breakthrough CRDi Intercooler Diesel Engine for more power, less maintenance. Trailblazing contemporary Philippine motoring, the Hyundai Tucson is the only CRDi Diesel-powered 4x4 SUV in the country now.

Classic Luxury... Designed for the New Age
Boasting futuristic design, power and classic good looks, nothing sings to mind like the Hyundai Sonata. Ride in Euro-Style, you will experience balanced safety and comfort features in a luxuriously comfortable ride that speaks of excellent taste. Under the hood of the new Sonata is a powerful 3.3L V6 engine, the only one in the market, so far. The 3.3L V6 engine supplies ample energy and responsive performance on demand.

The Sonata is equipped with superior safety features such as Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and Driver Airbags, and Electronic Force Distribution Brake (EDB) systems. Its rigid, structural integrity is a boon in safety measures, passing with flying colors in front and side impacts tests. The Sonata's safety features combined with its Front & Rear Independent Suspensions and Rack and Pinion Steering allow for the smoothest, stress-free ride. Elegant yet with substance, this vehicle owns an image that sets itself apart from the rest. Come and experience it for yourself and you will know the difference.

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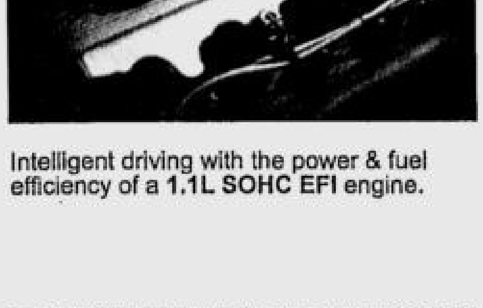

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Multiple intelligence educator reaps multiple successes

By Cecile G. Garcia
Contributor

CAREER TALES

ABAQUIN RAFFY LERMA

THIRTY-FIVE year-old Mary Joy Abaquin introduced the first multiple intelligence schools in the country and in the process, multiplied her successes. In 1996, Abaquin founded Child's Place, a preschool. Five years later, she established The Multiple Intelligence International School (MI), a grade school. Both are progressive and nontraditional and are anchored on the theory of multiple intelligence. "Child's Place and MI are the first multiple intelligence schools in the country," claims Abaquin, a staunch advocate of the theory. She serves as directress of both schools.

Abaquin started her career in education with a simple goal: to make the most difference, particularly in the field of early childhood education. She says, "I've always wanted to be with children and to make a difference in their lives. And I've always wanted to put up a school." Today, she has achieved her simple goal and made an impact on the educational system in the country.

Credentials

Abaquin took up AB Psychology and graduated with honors (magna cum laude) from the University of the Philippines. She earned a master's in Early Childhood Education from Boston University where she graduated with a summa cum laude. Prior to leaving for the US, she taught at UP, Department of Psychology and following graduate studies, at Bright Horizons, a preschool in Boston. Abaquin also pursued special studies in Programs in Professional Development at Harvard Graduate School of Education and in Programs in Continuing Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Though she did not really plan her career, Abaquin says she set a direction for herself early on. "I set certain goals." At this point, of course, her achievements speak for themselves. "It's a pleasant surprise how the schools have grown," she remarks. Child's Place and MI have a total enrollment of 500, with 20 to 25 students per class. "What makes us different, aside from our approach, is that we make a lot of decisions that are not good for business, but are good for the students. But then, this is not really a business with profit as the primary objective. This is a vocation."

Startup pains

Putting up her first venture, Child's Place, was fraught with the usual birth pains, recalls Abaquin. "We had to find the funds and the facilities. But the biggest challenge we faced was educating parents and changing their mindset," she discloses. Parents had to be taught to appreciate their children for what they are, recognizing and understanding their strengths and weaknesses. They had to be familiarized with the theory of multiple intelligence, which submits that we possess different kinds of intelligence. Abaquin points out, "We had to make them see that we don't define intelligence in the usual narrow way. Child's Place is a school that discovers and develops a child's multiple intelligence." MI uses the same method. According to Abaquin, they have touched and changed the lives of many families through these learning institutions.

Today, she faces another kind of challenge—that of sustaining growth. There's also the challenge of training teachers. "Teachers can be very powerful agents of change. They can mold children in the right direction. They can be critical in nation-building," contends Abaquin.

Belief in the child

An educator or teacher like herself needs infinite patience, she adds. "You have to truly believe that every child is worth working on. You have to believe in the child. Your role is to hone the child. Love for kids does not necessarily make a good teacher. You have to study because child education is scientific."

As owner and directress of Child's Place and MI, it is part of Abaquin's job to make decisions. "This is crucial to my position," she says. She admits it's not easy because whatever decisions she makes could affect the lives of others and could have repercussions. A child advocate, Abaquin, incidentally, is very hands-on in running the schools. As far as this educator is concerned, there's nothing quite as satisfying as seeing the progress and development of a child. She adds, "It's very motivating when kids are happy going to school, when they're constantly curious, when they're active learners."

Lifelong learner

It is not surprising to discover that learning is Abaquin's singular passion. She says she learns by reading, traveling and by meeting people who share her passion. "I hope to be a lifelong learner. I would like to think that there would always be questions I would want answered." In keeping with this passion, every now and then, she goes to the US for special studies and frequently invites consultants from the US and Canada to come and visit her schools.

A recent visitor and a role model for Abaquin is Dr. Howard Gardner, a psychologist and a professor at Harvard University and proponent of the theory of multiple intelligence. Expressing admiration for the man, Abaquin says, "Dr. Gardner is continuously thinking. As he himself puts it, he has a synthesizing mind." Needless to add, her schools are grounded on the theory he is espousing.

Work-life balance

Abaquin values her family more than anything. She has been married to husband Raymond for nine years and they have two girls, ages seven and four. Raymond, a businessman, has recently taken over the financial and marketing aspect of the schools. Says Abaquin, "I'm glad I have daughters because I can serve as a role model for them. They appreciate what I do. It has certainly helped me in raising and empowering them."

Last year, Abaquin was named Working Mom of the Year by the popular monthly publication, Working Mom. Also last year, she was given the Ilaw ng Tahanan Award by Meralco. The educator was given recognition by the two bodies for having achieved perfect balance between career and family.

Underlining her commitment, Abaquin says she will always be a teacher and an educator. "I might go into adult education later on, possibly teacher training," she discloses. Her ultimate goal, however, is to develop an ideal school campus.

Abaquin, a consultant for the Department of Education, hopes to make a difference in national development. She avers, "I would like to do my part in improving our educational system. Early childhood education is very important. I believe school reform should start at the grass roots level."

The new librarian sheds hackneyed image

By Ime Morales Aznar
Contributor

ALL ABOUT WORK

GAGATIGA JES AZNAR/CONTRIBUTOR

WE ARE all familiar with the image of the strict librarian: dark-rimmed glasses, hair in a tight bun, conservative clothing. Some children, at one time or another, have had nightmares involving the school librarian and overdue books. People seem to think that librarians arrange books on the shelves all day and collect money from delinquent borrowers.

Xavier School's grade school librarian Zarah Grace C. Gagatiga is not made of any of that old stuff. She is a hard-working scholar, a modern educator who refuses to be catalogued. "You can't afford to do that anymore," she insists, referring to the outmoded thinking that sees librarians as mere shelf-fixers, "because the library's role is to help in nation-building and to contribute to the children's education."

She talks dreamily of the libraries that she had seen in Singapore: "Everything's automated! The librarians there don't do clerical work, so they spend more time interfacing with clients." The Singaporeans have apparently realized that libraries are important so people can read and become scholars. They know that together with the development of schools, the libraries must be improved as well, because the materials that facilitate learning are found in these institutions.

Librarians as teachers

Gagatiga has a Bachelor in Secondary Education (Major in Library Science) from the Philippine Normal University. She is currently working on her master's in Library and Information Science in the University of the Philippines, Diliman. Gagatiga initially wanted to teach English Grammar and Literature, but her mother, a retired librarian herself, convinced her to take up the study. "I don't regret having followed my mother's advice," Gagatiga says, "because my job is closely related to teaching since librarians also teach—that's something a lot of people don't know."

Gagatiga reveals that librarians do both direct and indirect instruction. In the school library where she works, the librarians conduct programs that teach library skills or work study and research skills. These, according to Gagatiga, are survival skills that students need, especially when they go off to college. "Faced with so many information coming from a million different sources, will the student be ready to handle and process all these materials?" she asks.

It is, therefore, the task of the librarian "to teach the research process so that students will know how to use reference materials, to teach them how to write the bibliography, to have respect for Intellectual Property Rights." It is the role of the librarian to create in people a genuine love for reading. She adds, however, that "it's sad that very few institutions are doing this, because of budget restrictions and a general lack of initiative."

A rewarding profession

Most people don't know that there is a big demand for professional librarians here and abroad. In fact, so many career paths open up for the BS in Information Science graduate. "You can work as a corporate librarian, a school or university librarian, or as an archivist in museums," Gagatiga shares, "you can even work in the field of electronic data processing." Scholarships and grants are also being offered so qualified individuals can study in Europe, Singapore or the US.

The job is financially rewarding as well because "librarians get good compensation," Gagatiga reveals. Librarians are among the first ones to read newly released books, and for people who love to read, that is a delightful perk that comes with the job.

Promoting a reading culture

Generally, Filipinos don't use the library as much as they should. For Gagatiga, this is a challenge for every librarian. She affirms that "librarians must help promote a reading culture through the implementation of programs that develop and support literacy." So she wonders why librarians are being set aside since she sees the profession as a "scholarly bastion."

With someone like Gagatiga in this field, the future of school librarianship looks bright. She relates, "I feel very passionate about my job because it's my way of making my life meaningful. I don't look at it as a job to be done. This is my contribution to children, to future generations. It's something that I really like to do. And it feels good to be a librarian."

How can you make regular meetings more productive?

WORKING WOUNDED
Bob Rosner

DEAR WW: I hate meetings. Let me say that again. I hate meetings. Can you suggest any strategies to avoid them so I'll have more time to get my work done?

Doer Not A Talker

Scientists used to believe that homing pigeons used the sun to find their way from one place to another. Recently, a study used Global Positioning Satellites to test this theory. Surprisingly, the researchers found that the birds didn't use the sun, they followed roads and highways home.

Just as those birds used simple tools to get where they needed to go, you can use your meetings to end up where you need to go too. I'm not saying that all of your meetings will suddenly become productive, but you might be surprised how the following strategies can make many of them more so. For more strategies, check out "Death by Meeting" by Patrick Lensconi (Jossey-Bass, 2004).

Start with lightning round notes. Lensconi suggests that you begin your meeting with a series of reports on the major projects; each report should last no more than a minute. Keep it short and bring everyone up to speed on the major issues being faced and the current complicating factors.

Review key metrics. I'm a big believer in always being able to measure your key goals. How else will you be able to tell if you are making progress or lagging behind? Some metrics are hard to come by. But it's well worth it for the group to come up with a handful of them that the entire group can use to monitor performance. Examples include tracking the employee turnover rate, inventory, comparisons to competitors, etc.

Establish tactical agenda items. Use the lightning round notes and metrics to establish priorities for the group to discuss in greater detail. It's important to distinguish between stuff that is merely urgent and the issues that are truly important. It's tempting to be drawn into the flavor of the week but the most effective meetings always focus on the most important issues.

Tackle emerging issues. Every meeting needs to establish a place on the agenda for emerging issues. All participants should have a chance to raise issues that they think are important. Think of this as your early warning system to identify issues and concerns early.

Decisions or discussion? The best meetings I've ever attended are the ones that are action-focused. The worst devolve into long discussions about stuff that isn't important to the success of the group. That's why it's important to identify the issues that require action first, and to create opportunities for people to discuss issues only after key decisions have already been made.

I believe it's important for people to come together to share notes, brainstorm and agree on a shared vision; especially considering how much of our communication today is limited to one and two sentence e-mails. Use these tips in your meetings and people will start homing in on great ideas and greater productivity.

Here are the results from a recent workingwounded.com/ABCnews.com online ballot: Which movie title sums up meetings in your company?

—"The Right Stuff," 4.5 percent

—"Risky Business," 8.2 percent

—"From Dusk Till Dawn," 20 percent

—"I Walked With the Zombie," 67.1 percent

(Mr. Rosner, an internationally syndicated columnist, author and speaker, is based in Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail him at bob@workingwounded.com.*)*

Indonesia set to open labor market to Asean migrant workers next year

INDONESIA is set to open fully its labor market to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and other workers from member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) as required by the World Trade Organization, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said recently.

A report reaching acting Labor and Employment Secretary Danilo P. Cruz said Indonesian Minister of Manpower and Transmigration Fahmi Idris was quoted to have said that Indonesia shall start opening its doors to job seekers from Asean countries next year, and in 2008 to those from outside Asean.

Asean is composed of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The report also indicated that many countries were interested in sending their professionals and managers to Indonesia, particularly in the energy, mining, finance, tourism and telecommunications, including professionals in medicine, law, accounting and engineering.

Indonesia has also been asked to revoke its Economic Need Test policy, which limits the number of foreign workers into this country.

Minister Fahmi was also quoted as stating that the Indonesian government was preparing to establish a national certification agency for local workers to equip them with adequate skills and to enable them to be issued with certificates, which will in turn allow them to be employed overseas.

The proposed agency was envisioned to issue certificates not only to professional and managerial workers but also to medium and low-skilled workers such as sailors, nurses, drivers, construction workers and housekeepers.

Records at the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) showed there were some 1,744 OFWs deployed in Indonesia, most of them in the professional/technical and related works, in 2004.

Indonesia also employed OFWs engaged in production and related works including those who worked as transport equipment operators, laborers, administrative and managerial workers, clerical and related workers and service workers.

Cruz said more OFWs are expected to be employed in Indonesia when this country starts opening its doors wider to foreign workers next year. The acting DOLE chief, however, warned the workers against unscrupulous individuals and groups who may take advantage of the opening of the Indonesian labor market and offer nonexistent jobs to exact money from potential victims. He urged the workers to verify first with the POEA and the DOLE whether jobs in Indonesia offered them are legitimate. (*Source:* www.dole.gov.ph)

‘I want to take legal action against my former employer’

By Tita Datu Puangco

Advice
For the Anxious Person at Work

I USED to be a regular employee serving as a customer service agent but was asked to resign due to a complaint from one of our clients. According to our client, I was very aggressive and arrogant. He was asking about a particular service of our company that has its own hotline number. In response, I asked him to stay on the line for I will be transferring his call to the concerned group. He insisted that I answer his concern and asked if we, in our department, cannot handle his inquiry. I replied by explaining to him that his concern requires expert handling by the group that specializes with his concern. He refused to have his call transferred and persisted that I answer his question.

We are equipped, though, to answer his questions but I wanted to transfer his call because during the time of his call, there were calls on cue. So to minimize the waiting customers on the line, I had no choice but to transfer his call to the concerned group. But since he was very unrelenting, I submitted to his demands and did what I was told. He said that he was not satisfied with how I handled his call. He also said that he found my voice offensive, sounding more like an officer or supervisor than a regular call center agent. Our conversation ended with him asking for my complete name and threatening to report the incident to the company's management personnel.

After the conversation, I was asked by my team leader to call the client since he was asking for a verbal apology. I was reluctant to call him, thinking that I do not need to apologize since I have done nothing wrong except answer his inquiries, admittedly, in a rude manner. Eventually, after careful consideration, I called him to apologize even if I was not sorry about anything.

Then, I was called to a closed-door meeting with three officers. I was not able to answer their questions probably because of fear and because I thought retaliating would only cause more damage. What stuck in my mind was their statement that I was the rudest agent they have ever met. Then, they asked me what I wanted to do. I did not answer and one of the officers said that he wants me to resign. I did not respond and they ended our meeting by asking me to get out of the office. So I walked out, feeling extremely degraded. It was a practice in our office that if officers want somebody terminated, they ask that particular employee to resign.

I filed a three-day sick leave after the incident. I was so morally and psychologically damaged that I could not bring myself to go to work. I informed my team leader that I will resign effective immediately. He tried to change my mind, stating that there is a process and the gravity of my offense may fall under suspension, not termination. But I was already determined to resign.

I asked him if we could date my resignation retroactively to complete the 30-day policy so there won't be any problems with the human resources department. He said that we can't do that but I can submit my resignation letter effective 15 days after the incident.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

After being assured that there won't be any setbacks, I submitted my resignation letter. As I was processing my clearance with the said company and after the computation of my final pay, I was advised that I am indebted to the company.

I am so frustrated because of everything that happened. I do not know if I have any edge in filing a lawsuit against the concerned officers or probably the company. What is the probability of winning in case I submit a formal complaint? Who do I contact if ever there is a chance of getting justice? What do I do next time I am faced with a similar situation? Can you please advise me on what to do and the pros and cons of filing a lawsuit? Thank you very much!

Libra

Thank you for your letter. Start by reflecting on the incident that happened. You have to be aware that now more than ever, “the customer is king.” The recent issue of The Economist talks about the “heightened confidence level and sophistication of the average consumer, because people are more well-researched and knowledgeable.” As a customer service agent, you have to remember that the person at the other end of the line is king and therefore has to be treated like royalty. This means keeping yourself at a pleasantly assertive posture, not deferring but confidently providing service, but with strong consideration for the needs and feelings of the customer.

Sensitivity

I suggest you read on literature related to emotional intelligence. In today's stressful workplace, people are likely to be impatient and short-tempered. If you are in the service industry, you have to increase your emotional sensitivity, resilience, flexibility and maturity. This would allow you to sense whether the customer at the other end of the line can wait or is desperate for service. You will recognize that his request to be given the right information is expressing intense need and frustration. The way to respond is to recognize and respond to his need with care. I also understand how in your job there are standards and procedures you need to follow. You need to find a good balance between consideration and procedure.

I think your case may also suggest a need to improve the training program for call center agents to address situations similar to what you encountered. Instead of training for a single script that covers typical customer conversations, you should also be trained for prompts that will enable you to respond with spontaneity in situations like this where the client refuses referral to a hotline.

Legal advise

Now on whether you should file a lawsuit against the officers mentioned, I consulted with a good friend Atty. Ramon Godinez, Jr. These are some of his thoughts:

“Filing a lawsuit is no longer the primary option considering that this is the age of alternative dispute resolution. Rather, explore further avenues to put a closure to this thorny issue. The economics of pursuing a legal case against your former superiors or company with the invoice in legal and attorney's fees would be a deterring factor in initiating a lawsuit, despite your sentiments in getting ‘justice done.’

“Other than the economics involved, the waiting period in the resolution of a case would generally use up precious man-hours, which would be applied to more positive endeavors. On the ‘winnable factor,’ assuming you are bent on filing a case, the singular drawback is the voluntary essence of the submittal of your resignation letter. Your letter indicates that you were verbally determined to resign, further confirmed by your formal resignation letter. Both acts would show elements of volition and the absence of coercion and compulsion.

“Assuming coercion exists it should have the magnitude of being totally irresistible, presents a clear and compelling danger to your person and leaving you no other option but to resign. The legal cards are stacked up against a successful lawsuit.”

If in the future a similar situation arises, keep your cool, review all the facts, analyze your options, seek legal advice first, then make your decision. Do not decide to resign and then thereafter seek legal consultation. If your resignation is a done deal don't be bothered by the “what ifs” as this is an unhealthy mental activity. Bottom line advice: move on. Remember-if God closes a door, He will surely open another window.

By the way, we invite our readers to the International Family Fest, a tribute to Pope John Paul II set for April 16, Saturday, 8 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. at the Ynares Center at Antipolo City.

(Ms Puangco is CEO and chair of Ancilla Enterprise Development Consulting. Send feedback through e-mail to advice@ancillaedc.com.ph *or fax to* 892-2902.*)*

An opportunity to live out our faith

WORKING MOM

An Mercado Alcantara

MY OTHERWISE restless three-year-old Diego sat through the entire televised funeral of Pope John Paul II. Even my impatient 14-year-old daughter, Samantha, tired as she was from archery practice sat through the whole ceremony, not even getting up to take her cell phone messages. They were enthralled by the pageantry. Diego saw his storybooks come alive—what with a Greek Orthodox bishop wearing a crown, a sea of cardinals in vibrant red, and impressive Swiss guards at every camera angle. The odd mix of the solemn ceremony against a pop concert-like crowd—chanting, waving flags and singing their endearments—must have taken Samantha.

A simple story

Beyond the pageantry, however, I suspect it was the still the charisma of John Paul II at work. Even in death, he got the youth interested. Suddenly, Diego wanted to know more about this man they called the “Poke,” and Sam became curious about how a man in skis could eventually be Pope. I was struck by this very personal interest sparked by the man whose first public words as Pope, spoken to the crowd waiting at the Vatican, were, “Do not be afraid.” They had now come by the millions for him, courageous and inspired.

Even as we were mesmerized by the coverage, I was startled by a CNN correspondent who said: “At heart this is really a very simple story. The story of a man who tried to make a difference.” I was startled because it was as simple as that. And as profound as that. John Paul II's faith was so strong it pushed him to make a difference in the world. How I longed for my children to be propelled by the same strength of faith and to move in the world so that they could leave it a better place.

Power of a mother

Late into that night, as we all lay in bed sleeping, Diego was startled by a bad dream. He whimpered, wept and then eventually bawled at the memory of the dream and the frustration of not getting back to sleep right away. I took him in my arms and said, “Momsie's here, do not be afraid.” Diego stopped crying. And I instantly recognized the power of a mother. We have the grace to make a striking difference in the life of our children simply by being present to them. It is a simple story. Yet it is a profound story.

As working moms, we may find ourselves pulled in all directions, defeated by many frustrations, and more overwhelmed than in control of our situation. But our very status as mother provides us with an immense opportunity to make a vast difference in this world, if only we realize that being a mother offers us an opportunity to live out our faith. We are co-creators and formators before we are providers. Our children believe us when we say everything will be alright. They have faith in us. Let's reflect on where our own faith can take us.

Kets de Vries, a guru of leadership at Insead University, said that when he studied the common traits of great world leaders, he found out that they have one thing common in their childhood—a mother who believed in them completely. Can you be that for your child? If not, can you offer your child the mother John Paul II had, the one he promised *totus tuus*—I am all yours, Mary.

(An Mercado Alcantara is founding editor of Working Mom Magazine, published by ABS-CBN Publishing, Inc. Comments and questions are welcome at an_alcantara@abs.pinoycentral.com.*)*

Perfectionism can ruin your career

By Joel Garfinkle

ONE of Aesop's most memorable fables involves a perfection-seeking deer and an opportunistic hunter. While admiring his reflection in a pool, the deer said to himself, “Ah, where can one see such beautifully proportioned horns with such antlers as these? However, my slim and unsightly legs are not worthy to bear such a glorious crown.”

As the deer continued to dwell on his so-called “imperfection,” a hunter took advantage of the situation and fired an arrow in his direction. Ironically, the deer bounded perfectly to safety on the very legs that he had viewed as unworthy.

Unattainable ideal

Much like Aesop's self-critical deer, many people are unable to see the big picture and identify the passionate work that could lead to their dream career because they, too, are blinded by the unattainable ideal of absolute perfectionism.

They can't choose the best career path when perfectionism is running the show because every option seems equal and nothing appears to be the right course of action. They tend to spend a lot of time and effort making sure each decision is just right. If the pressure gets to be too intense, they avoid making a decision altogether, settling for the status quo instead of moving toward a truly fulfilling career.

When I ask my perfection-seeking clients about their innate talents or gifts, they are unable to respond in a way that fully represents them because they are, of course, looking for the most perfect answer.

Barrier to self-knowledge

When you hold yourself to a standard of perfection, it's almost impossible to know what your natural gifts truly are.

This standard of perfection has nothing to do with the real you. Instead, it compares you to family members, friends, and society and forces you to keep up with the image you think they represent.

You don't allow yourself to explore, think, feel and touch your own inner self. Like a deer caught in headlights, you become mesmerized by the desire to be what perfection wants you to be.

When you constantly project an image that doesn't reflect who you are, you begin to develop a deep level of doubt that grows until it becomes almost impossible to recognize the person behind this self-imposed wall of perfection. But the person inside—the real you—wants to find work that aligns to your natural talents.

Overcoming perfectionism

Fortunately, there are ways to conquer perfectionism and put the real you in charge of your career. Here are 10 of them:

1. It's a matter of life and death. Increase your sense of urgency by viewing each career decision with a “life or death” mentality. In other words, “If you had to make a decision your life depended on (such as the deer in Aesop's fable), what would you do?”

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

2. Whatever happens, happens. Focus on being more accepting and pleased with any potential outcome from your decisions. As long as you remain overwhelmingly concerned about a negative or unhelpful outcome, you'll never want to make a decision. On the other hand, if you become OK with whatever happens, you'll be much more able to make a decision. What you are actually doing is lowering the amount of weight being placed on having the most perfect outcome.

3. It's OK to be OK with the second best outcome. Don't always try for the most perfect and best possible outcome from any situation. Instead, allow yourself to settle for second best.

4. Lower your expectations. All perfectionists set expectations that are way too high, which in turn causes them to always shoot for the moon with no forgiveness when they fall short. If you lower your expectations, you'll be much more able to accept an outcome or decision much more quickly and with less stress. Think about how free you would feel if you lowered the expectations and allowed yourself to make a variety of choices for every decision. Eliminating unrealistic expectations gives any choice you make space to be known and followed through upon.

5. Not all decisions have consequences. Convince yourself that you won't be wrong by making that decision. Most decisions made by perfectionists have the expectation that there is only one “perfect” decision. Again, removing this unrealistic expectation that you will be wrong allows for complete freedom of choice without any consequences for failure. You now have no pressure when you make a decision without consequences. Another motivation question you could ask yourself is, “If I knew I would not be wrong, what would I do?”

6. Recognize that perfection is not necessarily the right answer. Once you make the choice, be OK when you don't make the perfect choice. Realize that everything is happening for a reason and the outcome caused due to the choice is exactly what needed to happen. It's about learning how to not get exactly what you want.

7. Your gut knows best. Just go with your gut and the first decision that comes to you, even if it feels like guessing.

It is better to move forward with a quick decision than it is to think about it too much, which allows doubt and the desire for perfection to dominate your thought process. This is where most people get stuck and unable to move forward. As a recent client said, “It is better to go with a less than ideal option than not go at all.”

8. Let experience be your guide. Move away from perfectionism and focus on your actual experiences that you have had. Thus, you'll be able to be in touch with the truth of your actual experience and let this drive your thinking, instead of your thoughts being driven by perfection.

9. Don't look back. Once you make a decision, immediately move to your first step and take action to move the decision forward. You will have a tremendous amount of doubt and the longer you wait to move forward, the bigger the doubt will become that you made the wrong decision. The greatest fear of a perfectionist is that they might make the wrong decision, so the quick movement into action helps temper the doubt.

10. Finally, listen to your inner voice. Get in touch with your own personal inner voice and what you know to be the truth inside of you. As you start to listen to your inner voice, you will inevitably get better at making decisions. Remember, even if you don't hear it, you still need to proceed with making a choice. Even if it is the wrong decision, this will lead to more confidence in the long run.

There comes a time in each of our lives when we must make a leap of faith in order to avoid a scenario where even the perfect decision becomes the wrong one because it has come too late. No matter what, never let the myth of absolute perfection become an excuse for inaction.

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People, Events & Products

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Editor Aries Espinosa

The Legend Villas brings class act to business and leisure

A BUSINESS hotel that feels like home is right around Pioneer Street from Edsa in Mandaluyong. Here lies a sprawling landmark of Filipino architecture that combines homestyle cuisine, first-class amenities and Filipino service with a smile. This is The Legend Villas unveiled, a 125-room hotel where one can do business nearly anywhere in the property and still get much-needed rest and relaxation with family and friends.

A member of the 100-percent Filipino-owned chain The Legend Hotels International Corp, The Legend Villas provides an inviting venue for those important meetings and memorable family moments.

Conduct negotiations in fully equipped meeting rooms with secretarial services. Dial up to the Net in the privacy of your room. E-mail your proposals via WiFi hotspots in all common areas. Lecture on industry issues in function rooms that provide a perfect fit for your seminar participants. Brainstorm your next campaign overnight in team suites for guests in large parties who must stay together. Extend Filipino hospitality to a foreign client with a relaxing stay in a wide range of choice rooms. Seal the deal over a flavorful dish in Lola Maria, the hotel's coffee shop and restaurant serving international dishes and Filipino favorites.

The Legend Villas has long been the corporate world's haven for those make-or-break business discussions. This is The Legend Villas' idea of a hotel that is also a virtual business center-business can be done anywhere and with pleasure. Tensions can run high in the middle of tough meetings, for example. But with the hotel's distinctly Filipino brand of service from guest service officers and staff alike, corporate clients have kept coming back. They return to efficient and amiable service, the latest in business technologies and amenities and that special Legend Villas touch, where the hotel knows you and what you need even before you say it.

Small wonder then when these business people turn to The Legend Villas for their Sunday family lunches, their weekend dips in the swimming pool and outdoor Jacuzzi with friends, or for planning debuts, wedding receptions or baptismal parties. The Legend Villas becomes a special place for building memories, whether it's reminiscing with relatives from out-of-town in the Villa Suites or staying up all night to chat with friends in the comfort of a Team Suite.

There is also 24/7 room service, valet parking, laundry and dry cleaning services, daily newspaper, foreign currency exchange, massage service and airport transfers, to name a few other services. To get to know The Legend Villas, one must become its welcome guest. So take time to turn that corner from Edsa and learn what makes this hotel legendary among business people and families alike.

For inquiries, call 633-1501 to 10 or visit www.legendvillas.com.ph.

March 11, 2005

CENTURY'S EASTER ACTIVITY MOA SIGNING

Century Park Hotel, Nestlé Food Services, Nestlé Ice Cream and 92.3 Joey recently had a memorandum of agreement signing for the successful 'Bedrockin' Easter at the Century'. Shown (seated, from left) are CPH F&B director Angel Yatco, CPH general manager Paul Gill, Nestlé Food Services' Teng Joven, and 92.3 Joey's Bel Bautista. Standing are Joey de Leon from Nestlé Ice Cream and CPH communications and media manager Toti Palileo. 'Bedrockin' Easter' was a morning of food and fun for the whole family March 27 at Century Park Hotel's Grand Ballroom.

CHINATRUST RECEIVES SUPERBRANDS AWARD

Chinatrust (Philippines) Commercial Bank Corp receives recognition for its successful brand-building efforts during the Superbrands Awards Tribute 2005 for Filipino Brands. The outstanding brands were selected from the consumer survey undertaken by global market research company Synovate. Shown is Chinatrust president Joey A. Bermudez receiving the award from (from left) Superbrands Philippines GM Karl McClean, Pac.com chair Antonio Cumagu, and Superbrands group managing director Peter Jeffrey.

LG Electronics introduces 1st portable DVD player

LG ELECTRONICS Philippines recently announced the advent of another breakthrough technology to address the past-paced lifestyles of today's Filipinos. The LG Portable DVD Player is the world's most compact and lightweight DVD player, measuring only 1 inch in thickness and equipped with a 7-inch TFT-LCD.

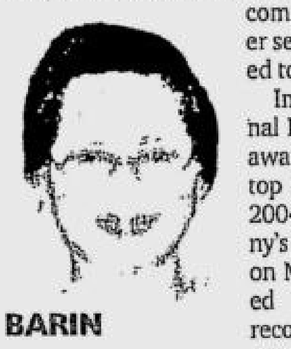
The introduction of the LG Portable DVD Player is LG's response to market demand on features diversification and integration in the category. One of the best features of the product is its multi-format playback system-it can play DVDs, VCD, audio CD and MP3 CDs, and accepts JPEG and Kodak picture CDs. Other features of the LG Portable DVD player include progressive scan, built-in stereo speakers, dual laser optical pick-ups, wireless card type remote control 100x high-speed smooth scan and on-screen graphic user interface.

The player also uses a removable battery to support 4-hour continuous use.

LGE's portable DVD player also uses a one-chip IC for DVD players developed with LGE's own technology to cut power consumption by more than half from 1.2W to 500mW. It is also ESP (electrical shock proof) to prevent vibration or shock for more efficiency for continuous disk playing. The portable DVD player can be used to enjoy DVD disks at home or for enjoying DVD movies and TV programs outdoors.

LGE's new portable player has the high-end model with LCD disk player and Low-end model without the LCD player. The LG portable DVD player is a currently enjoying high demand among consumers in different parts of the world since it was first introduced in South Korea in 2001 and in other international markets in 2002. Here in the Philippines, the LG Portable DVD player was soft-launched recently in the market, and expected to be a hot item among DVD aficionados.

Barin cites Eternal Plans for living up to promises



BARIN

SECURITIES and Exchange Commission Chair Fe Barin has cited leading pre-need company Eternal Plans Inc for living up to its commitment to deliver services when needed to its plan holders.

In a message to Eternal Plans on its annual awards presentation to top sales producers in 2004 and the company's 24th anniversary on March 9, Barin noted the company's record as one of the country's most reliable providers of life, education and pension plans.

"A pre-need company's track record in delivering what it promises to its investors is a tremendous sales booster," Barin said.

Referring to problems besetting a number of pre-need companies, Barin said the tradition of awarding outstanding sales performance this year is more meaningful in light of issues that "had not only brought a close watch and public scrutiny to one or two pre-need companies but to the entire industry as well."

Turning to the award-winning sales staff of Eternal Plans, Barin said the top sales figures recorded by the company last year "were the result of the dedication, persistence and extra efforts put in by every awardee."

Eternal Plans is a member of the Eternal Group of Companies founded by Ambassador Antonio L. Cabangon Chua. It has more than 50 branches in major cities all over the country.

Bits Clips

Professional selling workshop

THIS rare seminar could be the turning point of your salespeople in selling. Discover the unconventional tools and techniques that will help empower your people and enable them to become more productive. Don't miss this event on April 13, 14, 15, 1 to 5 p.m. at Holiday Inn Galleria Manila, Ortigas. The resource speaker is Rene Espinosa, one of the country's top sales trainers and motivational speakers. Among the modules are: Awaken the Champion in You; Sales Presentation Magic; Handling Objections and Closing More Sales. Registering for one day only is allowed, but people are encouraged to attend the whole program. This seminar is sponsored by Porter and Miles Inc. Call Mercy at 638-7719 or 20 for more information.

Managing restaurants

MB&G/PROACTIVE holds its Managing a Restaurant/Canteen Seminar-Workshop from April 13 to 19 (excluding weekends), from 1 to 5 p.m. at Eastwood City, Libis, Quezon City. Restaurateurs, hoteliers, resort and canteen operators and those planning to open their own foodservice business now have a chance to hone their skills. For details, call PACT at 687-1787 or 0915-4315375. The seven-day training will cover such topics as planning the concept, menu, location, layouts and equipment; hygiene and sanitation; human resource development; and cost control among others. MB&G/ProActive has been in the business of training foodservice executives and hospitality business owners since 1989.

Positive Thinking Week

IN 1991 former President Aquino signed Presidential Proclamation 712 for the nation to observe annually "Positive Thinking Week" from April 13 to 22. For 15 years positivism exponent and painter ER Tagle has observed the occasion annually with exhibits of his paintings. Herald Suites at Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City (in front of Makati Cinema Square) celebrates "Positive Thinking Week" by hosting a "Life is Beautiful" painting exhibit by Tagle and his students from April 13 to May 13 at the hotel lobby. The Positivism Art Gallery at 1429 Pablo Ocampo Street, Makati will also exhibit Tagle's paintings and wood sculptures titled "Prosperity Fish" from April 13 to June 13. April 13 also marks the birthday of the artist. All the artworks are for sale for the benefit of street children who have been attending free art lessons by Tagle. For details, call Anna or Manny at 811-2432 or 0927-5522288.

Disney returns for auditions

WALT Disney Entertainment talent casting representatives are coming back to Manila on April 15 in search of musicians, according to award-winning composer Ryan Cayabyab. Cayabyab, the executive and artistic director of the San Miguel Foundation for the Performing Arts, said the casting representatives are holding new auditions for musicians to perform at Hong Kong Disneyland scheduled to open later this year. SMFPA is the local partner of Walt Disney Entertainment Talent Casting. Talent casting representatives will be looking for musicians for the following instruments: piano (ragtime specialist); trumpet/cornet (for hotel band); trumpet (lead player for marching band); tuba (for marching band); sousaphone (for marching band); saxophone (doubling as clarinet and flute) and drums. Deadline for completion of application forms is at 6 p.m. on April 13. For more details, call Deo Dipasupil at 632-3769.

PNU seminar

VEERING away from the usual esoteric, highly theoretical speeches and lectures in a seminar, preschool and elementary school teachers will be treated with a demonstration festival at the Philippine Normal University on April 15 and 16. Designed for kindergarten and grades 1 to 6 teachers, the seminar will target sample lessons congruent to the theme "Changing Times, Changing Needs". Presenters include PNU faculty, selected Metrobank outstanding teachers and other specialists. Inquiries or reservations may be coursed through the secretariat, college of education at 527-0380.

Lasallian Scholarum exhibit

DE LA Salle University-Manila is holding a 3-day exhibit "Out of the Box…In the Public Eye: An Exhibit on the Lasallian Scholarum Awards" from April 15 to 17 at the Lower Level, Glorietta 3, Ayala Center. The exhibit features youth and education issues that are not seen on TV or newspapers everyday. These include government and private programs that address the needs of Filipino youth, such as the opportunity to learn and be educated. Featured projects are DOST-SEI's Science and Technology Scholarships, Ayala Foundation's Center of Excellence (Centex), RFM Foundation's TOSP, and Museo Pambata's Mobile Library.

Managing employee benefits

THE CENTER for Labor Education, Advocacy, Research and Development Inc (Cleared Inc), in cooperation with the UP School of Labor and Industrial Relations (UP-Solair) announces its seminar-workshop titled "Managing Employee Benefits" on April 14 and 15, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Bonifacio Hall, UP-Solair, Diliman, Quezon City. A team of facilitators will conduct the program led by UP associate professor and seasoned trainer Dr. Virgel C. Binghay. For details, call Mayet or Zeny at 927-8340; Iane/Fina at 920-7717 or Didi/Edgar at 928-6396, or e-mail vcbinghay@ph.inter.net.

2nd Pathways Youth Conference

THE PATHWAYS to Higher Education Program will be having its 2nd National Pathways Youth Conference, "Moving Forward", from April 13 to 16 at the Ateneo de Manila University. This conference promises to be better and bigger than the first one, as it will gather over 200 student leaders and moderators from different colleges and universities across the Philippines. It will also include more exciting activities, such as the first ever Pathways Amazing Race and a unique Pathways competition with loads of prizes at stake. For more information about the program and ways to help, call 426-6001 locals 4044 to 49, log on to http://www.pathwaysphilippines.org or e-mail pathways@admu.edu.ph.

IMI SIGNS-UP HCKI'S IDMS

Isuzu Manila Inc (IMI) recently signed-up Honda Cars Kalookan Inc. (HCKI) to implement HCKI's Integrated Dealership Management System (IDMS). The IDMS is the first ever in-house developed information system linking all vital operations of a car dealership and service center covering service, parts, sales, insurance, car registration, customer relations, and finance. Centralized databases are used throughout the applications for information efficiency and reliability. A low maintenance, stable and highly expandable client-server system, it features an information-rich customer profile and transaction records with flexible periodic reporting schemes and on-line screen queries. The system, developed and maintained using Progress Software, is being used by HCKI and other leading car dealers for more than 8 years. HCKI, aside from system implementation, also assists in revision, modification and provides consultancy services for IDMS users. Shown, seated from left, are Johnny Fetalvero, HCKI general manager; Paulo Abaya, IMI general manager; and Cecile Peñaflor, IMI administrative and sales manager. Standing, from left, are Rex Guinacaran, IMI MIS support staff; Shirley Gimenez, IMI MIS supervisor; and Jae Elieazar, HCKI MIS manager.

MOLA AT 'UNANG HIRIT'

MOLA Energy Drink joins GMA 7's 'Unang Hirit Tambayan' by giving out free Mola to the program's guests and *barangay* representatives. Mola Energy Drink has essential nutrients for improved physical and mental stamina. Mola, manufactured by Nutri-licious Foods Corp (NFC), one of the country's leading manufacturers and exporters of premium fruit juices and other beverages, is now available in selected supermarkets and convenience stores.

TransCo

National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PD REF NO. PB050330-PP0020 / PR NO. ITASD-05-009024

The **NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, BIDS AND AWARD COMMITTEE FOR HEAD OFFICE**, wishes to invite interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid on the item listed below:

Quantity	Item Description	PR No.	Approved Budget
1 LOT	SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING OF STATIONARY SINGLE CELL BATTERIES, 300 AMPERE HOUR @ 10 HOURS RATE, VENTED LEAD ACID TYPE, 48 CELL PER SITE (960 CELLS) CONNECTED IN SERIES-PARALLEL TO FORM 2 X 300 AH 48 V DC BATTERY STRING COMPLETE WITH CONNECTORS, JUMPER WIRE, ELECTROLYTE, VENT PLUG, TWO (2) COLLAPSIBLE RACK PER SITE AND ACCESSORIES	ITASD-05-009024	PhP16,400,000.00

1. Bid Documents will be available for issuance starting **April 10, 2005 to May 10, 2005** from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at the BAC Secretariat Office, National Transmission Corporation, Materials Management Division (MMD), Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable fee of **One Thousand Six Hundred Forty Pesos (P1,640.00)** per set.
2. Deadline for submission, receipt and opening of bids shall be on or before **2:00 P.M. of May 11, 2005** at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City. If the date is declared non-working day, the new deadline for submission shall be announced through a Bid Bulletin. Submission of documents must be clear, legible and readable. Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents shall not be accepted.
3. Pre-bid conference will be held on **April 26, 2005 at 2:00 P.M.** at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
4. All particulars relative to the eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A of Republic Act 9184.
5. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the corporation.
6. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) **ANTONIO G. LABAYANI**
Chairman, Bids and Award Committee

(PDI – April 13 & 19, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIDDING

The National Food Authority (NFA) wishes to announce that it will be conducting a bidding on May 03, 2005 at 10:00 a.m. at the FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER BUILDING FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila, among all interested corn suppliers for the supply of maximum 100,000 MT yellow corngrain equivalent to US Grade # 2 or better omnibus origin, in bags or in bulk, for NLT 30 June 2005 arrival with an appropriated budget from corporate resources of Php 1.3 B.

All interested suppliers are required to submit quotations in US$/MT, CFR, FO for all specifications on the basis of Documents against Acceptance (D/A) with a tenor of fifteen (15) days from receipt by NFA of the complete set of original documents required for payment.

Minimum volume to be offered per supplier shall be 10,000 MT. Vessels to be utilized should have a minimum load capacity of 10,000 MT for bagged corngrain cargo. Maximum load capacity of vessel shall be 50,000 MT for bulk yellow corngrain cargo.

All bidders are required to post a bid bond equivalent to 10% of the highest value of offered quantity in the form of cashier's/manager's check issued by a reputable bank in Metro Manila or an irrevocable standby Letter of Credit issued by a reputable commercial bank or in the case of an irrevocable stand-by L/C issued by a foreign bank, the same shall be confirmed by a reputable local bank.

Winning bidders are required to submit a performance bond equivalent to 10% of the value of the awarded quantity within three (3) banking days after receipt of the notice of award in the form cashier's/manager's check issued by a reputable bank in Metro Manila or an irrevocable standby Letter of Credit issued by a reputable commercial bank or in the case of an irrevocable stand-by L/C issued by a foreign bank, the same shall be confirmed by a reputable local bank. Bid bond can be converted to performance bond.

List of Eligibility Requirements and Instructions to Bidders may be secured starting **13 April 2005** thru MR. TOMAS R. ESCAREZ, Assistant Department Manager and MR. NESTOR U. PUANGCO, Division Chief III, Directorate for Marketing Operations, 5th Floor, NFA, Matimyas Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Quezon City with telephone numbers 712-1564; 742-4140; 743-8696; 711-7433; 740-1977; 712-1708; and 712-1572.

The terms of reference and offer sheets will be available from **April 13 to 29, 2005** (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.) upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P7,500.00.

The **pre-bidding conference** will be held on **April 20, 2005 at 10:00 a.m.** at the FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER BUILDING FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila.

Submission of bids will be on May 03, 2005 between 8:00 a.m. to 9:55 a.m. at the FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER BUILDING FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila. Opening of bids will start exactly at 10:00 a.m.

The National Food Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, to waive any required formality or defect therein and may accept the bid/s which is deemed most advantageous to the Agency.

(Sgd.) **JESSUP P. NAVARRO**
Deputy Administrator and
Chairman, BAC

(PDI–April 13 & 20, 2005)

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(PUBLIC BIDDING)

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) wishes to invite bidders for the procurement of **BLADE SERVERS and PERIPHERALS.**

Request for Proposal (RFP) can be obtained from April 14, 2005 to April 28, 2005, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Office of the Secretariat – Bids and Awards Committee (OSBAC) Room 1804, 18th Floor Citystate Centre #709 Shaw Blvd. Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php **5,000.00.**

PhilHealth had provided funds for this project. The approved budget for this contract is **Php 10,000,000.00.**

A pre-bid conference will be held on April 28, 2005 at 1:30p.m. at the OSBAC (Rm. 1804).

The bidders shall prepare their duly accomplished eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposal in three separate sealed envelopes and drop in the respective bid boxes located at the above-mentioned address.

Submission of bids will be on May 19, 2005 on or before 12:00 noon at the OSBAC. Opening of bids will follow at 1:30 p.m. at the same venue. The official time clock shall be the wall clock located at Room 1804 (OSBAC). Any bid submitted after the cut-off time will not be accepted.

The BAC-ITR shall determine if each prospective bidder is eligible to participate in the bidding by examining the completeness of each prospective bidder's eligibility requirements or statements against a checklist of requirements, using **the non-discretionary "pass/fail"** criteria.

To guarantee the faithful performance by the winning bidder of his/her obligations under the contract prepared in accordance with the bidding documents, he/she shall post a Bid Security in any of the following forms and amount;

Forms of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid	Amount of Bid Security
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	One percent (1%)	Php 100,000.00
Bank Guarantee	One and a half percent (1 1/2 %)	Php 150,000.00
Surety Bond	Two and a half percent (2 1/2%)	Php 250,000.00
Foreign Government Guarantee	One hundred percent (100%)	Php 10,000,000.00

We look forward to your participation in this worthwhile endeavor.

PhilHealth reserves the right to waive any formality on the eligibility requirements of this project. Furthermore, PhilHealth reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) **MELINDA C. MERCADO**
SVP, Health Insurance Operations Sector and
Chairperson, BAC-ITR

(PDI–April 13 & 20, 2005)

National Power Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

NPC-TGPP-2005-02

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)-Tiwi Geothermal Power Plant of NPC invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following requirements:

SCHEDULE	ITEM/DESCRIPTION	PR NUMBER	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
DATE OF BIDDING: MAY 5, 2005; 9:00 A.M.			
1A1	AVR-CHANNEL ASSEMBLY, SPECS; CODE; SDCS-CON-2A.	3TPM-05-063	P 4,500,000.00
1A2	REFLEX VELOCITY RECOVERY FAN CYLINDER, FOR CROSS FLOW COOLING TOWERS FOR UNIT #5	3TPM-05-086	P 1,200,000.00

NOTE : A Pre-Bidding Conference will be held at the Bidding Room on **April 21, 2005 at 2:00 PM**

Complete sets of Application form for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Unit, Plant B of Tiwi Geothermal Power Plant at Tiwi, Albay upon payment of non-refundable fee of PHP 1,000.00 per schedule starting on **April 19, 2005. Issuance of eligibility and bid documents is from 8:30 to 4:30 PM until May 3, 2005 only.**

Bids will be received at the assigned Bidding Room, Admin Bldg., Putsan, Tiwi, Albay on the date and time specified above after which Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals will be opened in the presence of attending bidders. Certificate of Registrations issued by other NPC Offices will be honored provided that the Certification is still valid, Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution in accordance with the IRR of "Republic Act 9184".

The Bidder shall furnish as part of his/her bid, a bid security in the amount equivalent to a percentage of the approved budget for the contract to be bid in the form of Cash, Manager's/Cashier's Check, Irrevocable Letter of Credit – One Percent (1%), Surety Bond - Two and a half percent (2.5%), penal and callable on demand with 120 days validity period from the date of opening of bids issued by a Surety or Insurance Company accredited by the Office of the Insurance Commission.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior to award of contract, waive any defects therein, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation, without thereby incurring any of the following: a) liability whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids and b) obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of the BAC's action.

CHAIRMAN
Bids and Awards Committee
TGPP

(PDI – April 13, 2005)

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE SCRAP/JUNK ITEMS

"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING: May 4, 2005, 2:00 PM, Solarium Hall, Bldg.-1, Grd. Floor, NPC-HO, Agham Road corner Quezon Ave., Diliman, Quezon City

The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding of the following scrap and junk items located at various NPC stations.

	Item Description and Location	Minimum Bid Price
SCHEDULE - I		
1.	One (1) lot of scrap metal consisting of junk diesel engine parts, stators, rotors, power cables, steel plate cuttings, steel annulus, steel beam, plant equipment and accessories located at Aplaya Diesel Power Plant, Jasaan, Misamis Oriental	P 6,344,000.00/lot
SCHEDULE - II		
2.	One (1) lot of scrap metals consisting of metals forms, steel buoy with mooring chain, steel circular frames, steel tanks located at the Re-Greening Field Office BNPP, Morong Bataan	P 750,000.00/lot

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. **PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S/ CASHIER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE OFFER.**
2. **LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN (2004 ORIGINAL OR XEROX COPY) OF THE BIDDER OR AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT (ORIGINAL) OF THE COMPANY AND ONE (1) COPY OF VALID IDENTIFICATION CARD LIKE DRIVER'S LICENSE, GSIS ID, SSS ID, POSTAL ID, PASSPORT, PRC ID AND COMPANY ID.**

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00/set from Mr. Alfonso D. Alday, Manager, Warehousing, Inventory, Traffic and Asset Disposal Division (WITADD) at Bldg. 1, Ground Floor, NPC Head Office, Corner Agham Road and Quezon Ave., Diliman, Q.C. or call telephone no. 922-8431. For Mindanao bidders, bid forms may be secured from Mr. Milo Relucio, Section Chief, Warehouse, Inventory traffic and Asset Disposal Section. **Deadline for issuance of bid form is 4:30 PM May 3, 2005.**

For the Materials Management Department

(Sgd.) **FELIX B. TACATA, JR.**
OIC, MMD

(PDI - Apr. 11, 12 & 13, 2005)

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

ITB No. 04-021-05

The Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) invites interested contractors only with PCAB license Small B Category to apply for eligibility and to bid for

RIV No.	Qty.	Item/Description	Approved Budget
L-05-009	1 Lot	Supply for Labor and Materials for the Repair of Gantry Concrete Pedestal at LRT Line-1 Carriageway	Php 2,112,325.00

Bid documents can be obtained from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Secretariat at the Ground Floor, Administration Building, LRTA Compound, Aurora Blvd., Pasay City, during regular office hours starting **April 14-April 21, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **One Thousand Pesos (Php 1,000.00).**

Site Inspection will be held on **April 25, 2005**, Monday, 10:00 a.m. For the purpose of clarifying issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **April 27, 2005**, Wednesday, 10:30 a.m. at the above address.

The BAC Secretariat shall receive sealed bids not later than **May 12, 2005, Thursday at 9:00 A.M.** and shall then be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

Bids shall not be considered without the presence of the supplier/bidder or its authorized representative.

LRTA reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, without assuming any obligation whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of its bids, and will entertain only such bid/s established to be the most advantageous to the Government.

(Sgd.) LT COL CESAR B. CHAVEZ (GSC) MNSA
Deputy Administrator
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – April 13, 2005)

NFA to hold rice auctions

THE National Food Authority is slated to hold three auctions this month for the sale of a total of 50,000 metric tons (MT) or one million bags of Vietnam rice.

NFA administrator Gregorio Y. Tan, Jr. said the agency will accept sealed offers from farmer organizations and retailers for the sale of 200,000 bags for each group. The remaining 600,000 bags will be up for sale to all other interested buyers. The rice is of good quality at 15% brokens. Pre-auction conferences will be held on April 7, 14, & 21.

Tan informed that the dates of the auction have been set on April 12, 19, and 26 at the NFA Central Office along E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Quezon City.

Interested buyers or bidders are required to submit copies of their NFA license, bid bond and authorization documents. Bidders may get copies of the auction terms and conditions starting April 7 from the NFA's Directorate for Marketing Operations (DMO).

Meanwhile, as of March 29, more than 380,742 MT of imported rice have arrived the country's various ports out of the 449,667.95 MT to be imported for this year, according to Tan.

He stressed that the imported rice which come mostly from Vietnam will be for food security, especially for the lean months of July to September.

A total of 13 disports nationwide are being used in the arrival and unloading of the imported rice prior to market distribution through the agency's accredited retailers.

Petron fleet card sponsors PMAP AC 2005

PETRON Fleet Card formalized thru a signing of a Memorandum of Agreement its sponsorship of the Annual Conference (AC) of the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) last 22 March at PMAP Center in Mandaluyong City.

Photo shows (l-r) Ramon S. Medina, FPM, Past PMAP President, Bobbie Co-Laguitao, FPM, Corporate Secretary, Jimmy M. Isidro, FPM, Treasurer, President Lina A. Aseneta, FPM, Ramil Carmen, General Manager Cards Group Petron Fleet Card, Ed Pasion, Marketing Head Petron Fleet Card, Jo Pojol, Sales Manager Petron Fleet Card and PMAP Executive Director Gerry A. Plana, FPM, IPMA-CP.

The 42nd PMAP Annual Conference, with the theme "Gawa, hindi Dada: Delivering Results thru Purposeful Action," will be held on September 28 to 30, 2005 at the Waterfront Hotel in Lahug, Cebu City.

PNOC – Energy Development Corporation
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, M.M.
Philippines MCPO Box 2102 Telephone 893-6001 / 1320

PNOC
The Energy Company

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO RE-BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to re-bid for the project:

Palinpinon II Optimization Geothermal Project
(Full Turnkey 20 MW Geothermal Power Plant) EDC 02-253-I

The Approved Budget is PhP 1,619,970,000.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is twenty-three (23) months.

Application for Eligibility may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group – BAC Secretariat from **April 13, 2005** until **April 26, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **US Dollars: Five Hundred (US$500.00)**

Application for Eligibility and Letter of Intent must be submitted to the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group – BAC Secretariat at First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City **not later than 5:00 p.m. of May 4, 2005.**

Bid documents will be available for issuance to eligible bidders on **May 24, 2005** upon payment of the non-refundable fee of **US Dollars: Two Thousand (US$2,000.00).**

Site inspection is on **June 15, 2005** For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **June 17, 2005, 10:00 a.m.** at the Board Room, Fourth Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

Initial Technical Proposals shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group – BAC Secretariat at First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City **not later than 10:00 a.m. (Contracts Administration Group – BAC Secretariat Office Wall Clock Time)** of July 25, 2005.

Sealed Final Technical Bids and sealed Price Proposals shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group – BAC Secretariat at First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City not later than 10:00 a.m. **(Contracts Administration Group – BAC Secretariat Office Wall Clock Time)** of October 3, 2005 and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC CHAIRMAN

(PDI – April 13 & 26, 2005)

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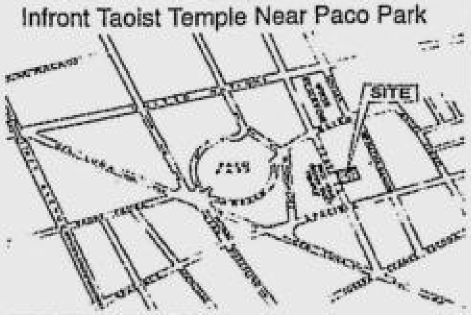

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Notice is hereby given that the application of TAASI INTERNATIONAL, INC. with office address at #7 Pioneer Street, corner Sheridan Street, Mandaluyong City for registration with the Board of Investments under Book I of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, otherwise known as E.O. 226, as Amended, as a Existing Export Producer of Garments and Textiles Designs with a capacity of 7,800 pieces per year with project site at same office address stated above has been officially accepted on April 12, 2005 and is currently being processed.

Any person with valid objections to or pertinent comments on the above-mentioned application may file his/her objection, in writing under oath, with the BOI within one (1) week from the date of this publication.

Issued this 12th day of April 2005.

(Sgd.) RUDY B. CAÑA
Officer-in-Charge
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI – April 13, 2005)

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estates of the late Lorenzo C. Masilungan and Rosalina C. Masilungan were settled by their heirs on 4 March 2005 through an Extrajudicial Settlement of Estate, Doc. No. 302, Book No. 1, O.R. No. 2840121, Service No. 990, Series of 2005, acknowledged before Vice Consul Ferdinand Philip F. Victoria of the Philippine Consulate General of the Republic of the Philippines in the City of Sydney, NSW, Australia

(PDI – April 13, 20 & 27, 2005)

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is given that Celebrity Sports Plaza Stock Certificate No. 1897 with 30,000 shares of Dra. FE V. FERNANDEZ has been lost. If no contest is received new certificates will be isued.

(PDI- April 6, 13 & 20, 2005)

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NFA distributes rice for gov't's FSP

THE NATIONAL Food Authority (NFA) has already issued a total of 82,551 bags of rice to the Department of Education (DepEd) for distribution to schoolchildren beneficiaries under the Food for School Program (FSP) of the government.

According to NFA administrator Gregorio Y. Tan, Jr., the total volume of rice delivered to the (DepEd) is equivalent to 89 percent of the total targeted volume allocated for the whole duration of the program.

Tan said that out of the total rice issuances for the program, 26,290 bags were distributed to beneficiary pupils in Manila and Quezon City schools; 14,103 bags to Rizal schoolchildren; 14,797 in Caloocan, 13,492 in Cavite and 13,869 bags to Bulacan schoolchildren-beneficiaries.

The NFA has targeted to deliver 93,193 bags of rice for 49,049 pupil beneficiaries identified by DepEd nationwide.

Based on the list of beneficiaries under the FSP, 33,446 pupils were from Metro Manila while 15,603 were from the provinces.

Rice varieties delivered to schoolchildren-beneficiaries are iron-fortified rice (IFR) and regular-milled rice (RMR).

FSP is funded under the Presidential Social Fund (PSF).

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Child of God, Pilipino, son of Pedro and Josefina,
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Phi Kappa Mu Brod, Husband of Bella,
Father of Clark

ALFREDO T. RAMIREZ

Please include him in your prayers, especially today, April 13, on the second year of his demise, as we, his family, remember him with love in our daily prayers.

Thank you.

> "...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
>
> — 2 Corinthians 5:8

You are gone...
But for us you never left.
God has you in his keeping
We have you in our hearts.

JUDGE ANTONIO GAMBOA BAUTISTA (Ret.)

(UP LAW CLASS '39)

Peacefully joined his Creator on April 9, 2005 at the age of 91.

Even as we mourn his death, we celebrate his life and legacy. We are very grateful to God and we fervently pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His children, **Ernie-Guia** & children; **Cora-Sammy Tomas** & children; **Judgie-Susie** & children; **Ching-Ely Pe Benito** & children; **Pep** (†)-**Cecil** & son; **Lito-Jenny** & son; **Femy-Maurito Cabading** & children; **Cecily-Rolly Vendivil** & children; **Toots-Cecille** & children; sisters **Rosario-Jesus De Gala, Consorcia Lopez**; nephews, nieces and cousins request pious readers for their prayers.

His remains lie in state at the family residence in Luna, La Union.

Interment will be held after a Holy Mass at 2:00 p.m., Saturday, April 16, 2005.

Helen Dolorico Divino, M.D., FPOGS

Former HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY,
Former MEDICAL DIRECTOR
Dr. FE DEL MUNDO MEDICAL CENTER

Accomplished and dedicated physician, wise and compassionate mentor, loving and devoted sister, thoughtful and caring Tita, generous and devoted Tita Lola

Peacefully joined her Creator on April 11, 2005.

She is survived by her siblings and their spouses: **JACOBO, JR.** & MAGDALENA, **MANUEL, SR.** & EUMENA, **VIRGINIA** & GREGORIO; nephews and their spouses, and nieces: **GREGORY** and ROSALIE, **JACOB** and VIRNA, **GERALDINE, GEOFFREY** and CARLA, **LILY ANN, MANUEL JR.**; grandnephews and grandnieces: **POPOI, QUILO, T, GIO, ANDIE, SABINE** and **STELLA.**

Her remains lie in state at the Mt. Carmel Chapel of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, Broadway, New Manila, Quezon City. Daily masses are held at 7 p.m.

Thanksgiving Mass will be held at 9 a.m. on Sunday, April 17, 2005 at the St. Joseph Chapel. She will then be brought to the Loyola Memorial Park Crematory in Marikina City for cremation and then interment.

In lieu of flowers, those whose lives she has touched may give donations to the fund the family is raising to improve the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dr. Fe Del Mundo Center.

> **"For God so loved the world, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have Everlasting life."** — John 3:16

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Philippine Ports Authority-Port District Office of Southern Luzon (PPA-PDOSL for brevity) invites prospective bidders to submit their eligibility requirements and bid documents and participate in the public bidding, to be conducted pursuant to Republic Act No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations, or the provision of Security Services for the period of two (2) years, commencing on 01 July 2005 and ending on 30 June 2007, in its offices mentioned below:

Areas covered	No. of Guards
1. Port District Office	7
2. Port Management Offices of	
a. Batangas	64
b. Calapan	39
c. Legazpi	62
d. Puerto Princesa	31
	203

The proposed contract has an approved budget of fifty four million two hundred fifty three thousand two hundred pesos, Philippine currency, (PhP 54,253,200.00) which is to be charged against the corporate budget of the Philippine Ports Authority.

The value of the prospective bidder's largest single contract and similar to the contract to be bid (completed as of May 12, 2005), adjusted to the current price using the whole sale consumer price index, must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget for the contract to be bid otherwise it shall not be allowed to apply.

I. **ISSUANCE OF APPLICATION FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID FORMS**

Application for eligibility and bid forms may be secured from the Secretariat of Port District Security Bids and Awards Committee (PDSBAC for brevity) starting on 14 April 2005 until 28 April 2005, from 8:00AM to 6:00 PM, at the PPA-PDO Southern Luzon Office, PPA Training Center Compound, South Harbor, Port Area, Manila. Said documents will be furnished the prospective bidders after payment of a non-refundable amount of two thousand pesos, Philippine currency, (PhP 2,000.00), exclusive of VAT.

II. **PRE-BID CONFERENCE**

The pre-bid conference shall be on 28 April 2005, 10:00 AM, at Conference Room of the Philippine Ports Authority Port District of Southern Luzon, PPA Training Center Compound, South Harbor, Port Area, Manila.

III. **SUBMISSION OF ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND BID DOCUMENTS AND OPENING OF BIDS**

Submission of Eligibility requirements and Bid documents shall not be later than 10:00 AM on 12 May 2005 to the Secretariat of the Port District Security Bids and Awards Committee, also at Conference Room of the Philippine Ports Authority-Port District of Southern Luzon, PPA Training Center Compound, South Harbor, Port Area, Manila.

Only the bids of eligible bidders will be opened in the presence of the bidders or their duly authorized representatives, as evidenced by the Special Power of Attorney/Board Resolution. The opening of bids shall be done right after the checking of the eligibility requirements.

IV. **BID SECURITY**

Prospective bidders shall post a bid security in the form and amount, indicated below

Form of Bid Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable Letter of credit	One percent (1%)
Bank Guarantee	One and half percent (1-1/2%)
Surety Bond	Two and a half percent (2-1/2%)

The award shall be made not only on the basis of the bid price but also on the sufficiency of the supplies, equipment and administrative supervision to be provided.

The PPA-PDOSL BAC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or offers which it may consider to be disadvantageous and not beneficial to the Authority and may waive any defect or informality therein.

6th day of April 2005, Manila.

HECTOR E. MIOLE
Port District Manager and Chairman, PDS-BAC

(PDI - April 6 & 13, 2005)

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BUSINESS

We have nothing to hide, oil companies tell DOE

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy is asking local oil firms to submit a breakdown of all the cost components of their operations, if only to prove that the firms are not operating as, or part of, a cartel.

Fernando Martinez, chair of the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association, said the oil companies last week received a letter from the DOE, "asking us to break down our costs at each level."

"We'll comply within the week by submitting our financial statements and inventories," Martinez said in an interview yesterday. We have nothing to hide."

He said the other oil firms would soon send their responses to the DOE request within the week.

But Martinez said that the task of actually looking over all the cost components of each and every local oil firm was "unrealistic."

"It's cumbersome to break down the costs at each level," he said. "It's unrealistic to do that and I don't think the DOE can handle that. Besides, the (Oil Deregulation) Law doesn't envision that kind of monitoring."

Having oil firms break down their costs at each and every level and submitting these for scrutiny would almost be tantamount to regulation, Martinez added.

The DOE was prompted to issue the directive after Sen. Manuel Roxas II accused local oil firms of behaving like a cartel.

Martinez said local oil companies could not be engaged in a cartel as most of them were not even earning any money.

"We would like to emphasize that any suggestion of cartelization is not true," Martinez said. "We have no control on the price and we're not even making any money. It's an insult to be accused of cartelization."

He said Caltex Philippines Inc., for example, "lost some P1.9 billion in 2003."

"If we were all in a cartel, then why would we allow ourselves to not make any money?" he added.

He said if the DOE wanted to investigate the oil firms, it should just look over all the invoices of the firms.

The Department of Justice-DOE Task Force on oil monitoring has been revived to look at complaints filed against oil firms accused of unreasonably raising the pump prices.

The task is mandated by RA 8479, or the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Law.

But according to Martinez, current pump prices could not even be called unreasonable as world prices dictated that local oil companies hike their prices to enable them to cope with rising costs.

Stop opposing VoIP, Neda urges telcos

By Clarissa S. Batino

ECONOMIC Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, has urged telecommunications companies to stop opposing a government policy seeking to fully deregulate the industry and allow widespread adoption of the Voice over Internet Protocol or VoIP.

VoIP is a technology that allows even non-telco companies to provide voice calls through the Internet for as low as 10 US cents per minute against the current rate of 40 US cents per minute.

The economic planning chief said the cost of telco services in the country remained one of the highest in the world.

Neri said telco companies must stop resisting the VoIP and instead help the National Telecommunications Commission to firm up the rules that would ensure a level field for all players.

According to Neri, foreign investors have been complaining about the high cost of telecommunications services in the Philippines.

VoIP would benefit more than 8 million Filipinos overseas, Neri said. With VoIP, they may now communicate with their loved ones at a much cheaper rate.

"It will be more beneficial for the telephone companies to hasten the wider use of this technology or they would suffer the consequences of being left behind," the concurrent director-general of the National Economic and Development Authority warned the telco officials.

The Neda chief also urged the telephone companies to beef up their existing infrastructure to enhance the quality of telco services in the country. He hoped the improvements would bring down the cost of communications, he added.

"Neda estimates that the cost of current international calls can be reduced by a much as 75 percent, from the present 40 to only about 10 US cents per minute, or even lower," Neri said in a statement.

Other Asian countries are enjoying lower telco rates, he added.

The Neda cited the NTC for recognizing that the VoIP is a value-added service

The NTC recognition "would now allow more players, other than telephone companies, to offer VoIP, thus spurring greater competition, which could dramatically lower the cost of overseas calls," Neri said. "We are now seeing the benefits of competition, especially in the telecommunications industry, which has been a major source of growth for the Philippine economy."

Earlier, the NTC ruled that the VoIP was a value-added service. This means that even non-telco players like Internet service providers could develop products using high-speed Internet technology as opposed to the traditional circuits that telco players use.

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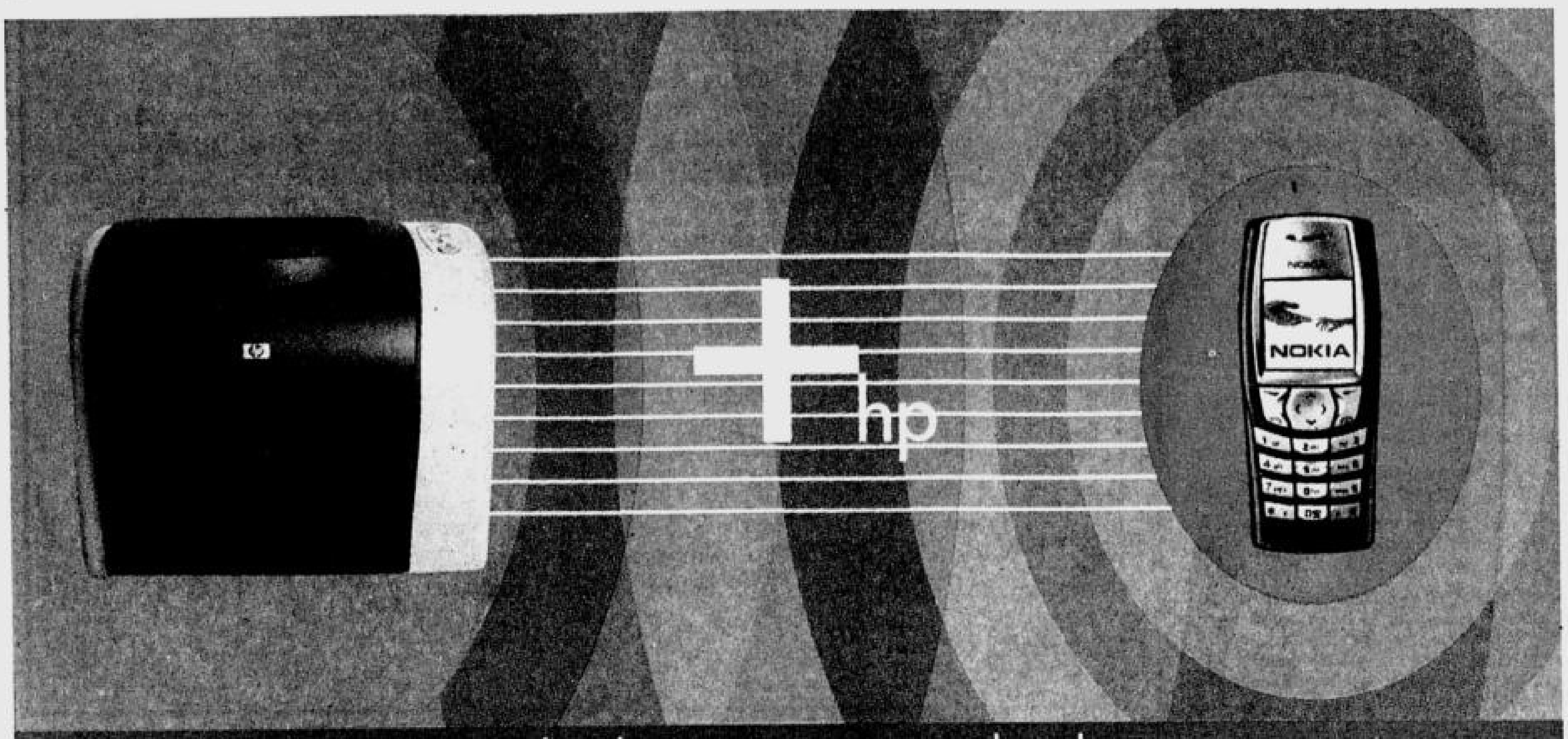

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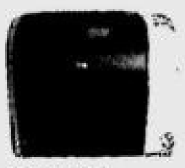

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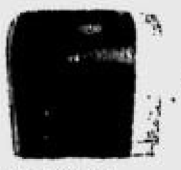

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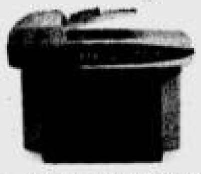

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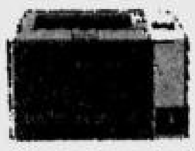

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Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

'BEASTS' hunt for 'Chocolates' on the way to Carmen, Bohol.

NOT FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED. Blood Compact site marker in Barangay Bool in Tagbilaran shows native Boholano chieftain Datu Sikatuna forging the famous compact with Don Miguel Lopez de Legazpi.

THE 'ISUZU Joe' of motoring (Ronald Baladad) feels at home with the cuddly primates.

'780 horses' turn heads of smallest Boholanons

Text and photos by Tessa R. Salazar

THE GENTLE creatures stared wide-eyed in disbelief, as if thinking, "What beast did man introduce to this island this time?" But the tarsiers didn't need to fear.

The six Isuzu D-Max—each with a pull force of 130 horses packed in their engines—laden with 19 motoring journalists from Manila and Cebu—came not to hunt down the smallest of all primates. They came, instead, to pay homage to it, and to the rest of the natural wonders the island province Bohol had to offer.

MAN-MADE forests in Bilar (mostly mahogany trees) block the sky and envelop the trucks.

Larger than life

Bohol nowadays is larger than life. The home of the Chocolate Hills is also the apple of the tourists' eyes. It now may be the favorite motoring jaunt, too, for motoring journalists taking on tourist sights on the fly.

For this writer, however, Bohol means more than just tarsiers and delicious-looking hills. Bohol happens to be my mother's home province, and my father's great grandmother's, as well. Thus, a stop in Bohol also meant a stop at close relatives' homes.

For this opportunity to make a mini-homecoming of sorts, there's the Isuzu D-Max to thank. Shipped in from the Isuzu dealerships in Manila and Cebu (four 4x4s and two 4x2s), the six units stayed with the group from the time we set foot on the spanking new airport in Tagbilaran up to the last hearty breakfast at the classy Bohol Tropics Resort.

A walk in the park

A pickup this powerful, however, must have found Bohol a walk in the park. Though Bohol is a small province packed with wonders both at sea and on land, we found no place to "rough up" the turbo–intercooled D-Max, so to speak, and ultimately test to the limits its 4x4 capabilities. But never mind that. From the meandering beauty of the sparkling green and mystic Loboc River to the magnificent 3,000-hectare man-made forest in Bilar town, there was simply no time to "get

780 HORSES/ C2

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Latest Isuzu drive advocates 'SEE' technology

MARSHALS check the diesel consumed at the finish line at the Caltex station in Candelaria, Quezon.

By Charles E. Buban

AS THE PRICE of a liter of gasoline hit its highest level in years, car manufacturers like Isuzu Philippines Corp. take the opportunity to promote the use of diesel engine, which according to the Japanese manufacturer has undergone many technological changes that meet today's environmental regulations as well as need for more fuel-efficient vehicles.

This is what IPC is advocating nationwide through its Safety, Economy and Environment-friendliness or SEE technology.

"Actually, this is an Isuzu global thrust to promote the superiority of our direct injection or Di diesel engine," explained IPC executive vice president Kazuhiko Sho.

He added that in this period of rising gasoline prices, it would be advantageous for motorists to use diesel-fed vehicles.

Breaking the stigma

"The stigma of diesel for being a 'dirty' fuel must soon change considering that today's generation of diesel engines are more efficient and emits less pollution," explained Sho.

To prove his point, Sho together with IPC Service Department head Toshiyuki Watanabe went to Pampanga last March 19 to lead the flag off of 36 participants who joined the first (of four) SEE Technology event called "I SEE Drive."

EVP Kazuhiko Sho, left, and VP for corporate business Arthur Balmadrid led the flag off at Isuzu Pampanga dealership.

The participants of the event, driving a manual D-Max 4x2 (16 entries) and manual Crosswind Sportivo (20 entries) must travel a total of 235.5-km distance, from Pampanga to a Caltex fuel station in Candelaria, Quezon, wherein the event's marshals will compute the diesel consumed and the time they spent in doing so.

Best fuel efficiency

"The participants must achieve the best fuel-efficiency record using strategies in time precision and economy driving, that is, be able to finish the race with the lowest amount of fuel consumed and with the least margin to the time allotted by the marshals," said Watanabe.

The winning team must not only register the best fuel-efficiency rating since the other 50 percent of the final score will be based on the points earned while passing four checkpoints along the route.

Winners all

At the end of the one-day race, the team of customer Carlos Jericho Garcia and Isuzu Bulacan's Joel Cervania won the D-Max category for accumulating 172 points (18.79 km to liter consumption achieved in 4 hours and 17 minutes travel time).

Likewise, the team of customer Virgilio Veneracion and Isuzu Bulacan's Alfredo Manialong Jr. won the Sportivo category for accumulating 159 points (17.50 km to liter consumption achieved in 4 hours and 24 minutes).

The two teams received P50,000 cash prize, trophies and Isuzu and Caltex items.

Other winners

Other winners included the teams of customer Agripino Katigbak and Isuzu Batangas' Paul Erazo, and customer Crispin Amancio and Isuzu EDSA's Edmundo Osea for finishing second and third respectively, in the D-Max category.

Meanwhile, the teams of customer Reggel Aquino and Isuzu San Pablo's Buen Manzanero, and customer Eric Sulfelix and Isuzu Cabanatuan's Lamberto Reyes finished second and third respectively, in the Sportivo category.

The second and third placers got P30,000 and P20,000 cash prizes, respectively.

Special awards

Finishers who registered the best fuel efficiency rating were also recognized. D-Max category second place winners Katigbak and Erazo (for consuming just 19.78 km to a liter); and the team of customer Jessica Toehio and Isuzu Davao executive Melissa Liu (for consuming 19.83 km to a liter) in the Sportivo category also won prizes.

"The two teams proved why driving a D-Max or a Sportivo makes sense these days. Apart from the savings that can be enjoyed for using diesel fuel, these two vehicles are very hardworking," informed Sho.

Sho said other I SEE Technology activities are the I-SEE Technology sticker campaign at Caltex stations (until April) wherein instant freebies will be given to motorists who will be spotted with an "I SEE Technology" bumper sticker.

These lucky motorists will receive P1,000 cash plus Isuzu/Caltex premium items. On the last date of the spotting schedule on April 30, a P30,000 cash prize awaits two winners who will be spotted with the same stickers.

Mall tour

There will also be an I SEE mall tour, wherein Isuzu will display its cut-up D-Max as well as the company's latest vehicles.

The last component of the campaign is the I SEE summer cheering competition, wherein cheerleading groups from 17 leading Metro Manila universities will vie for the P100,000 pot.

The SEE drive is a partnership between IPC and Caltex Philippines Inc. (Power Diesel/Delo Sports).

Applause for Lyn, Sekiguchi-san and Mitsubishi

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

FIRST, the applause.

Ladies first, please?

Lyn Manalansang-Buena, take a bow. Lyn has been promoted to vice president for marketing services of Viking Cars Inc., the official distributor of Volvo in the Philippines.

She deserves it. Lyn has been a topnotch executive for years now and I've seen her work at close range.

Lyn used to be assistant president for the same division handling advertising and overall direction of the marketing group. She has been a vital cog to the growth of Viking Cars since its birth in 1995, the year Volvo landed in the Philippines.

Next comes Takashi Sekiguchi, who was recently appointed new president and general manager of Honda Cars Philippines Inc. effective April 1. Sekiguchi replaced Mitsunari Takano, who will hold a new post in Japan.

Graduating from Meiji University in Japan in 1982, Sekiguchi has been with Honda for more than 10 years now, having joined the giant Japanese outfit in 1988.

Sekiguchi had worked at the North America sales department of Japan Honda head office first before he was sent to American Honda Motor Co. Ltd., USA, in 1996. Six years later, he handled automobile product planning in Japan before being sent to the Asian Honda Motor Co. Ltd. in Thailand to oversee the Asia-Oceania automobile division.

Arnel Doria, Honda's most trusted executive at Honda Cars Philippines, said Sekiguchi was ecstatic over his new post.

Doria quoted Sekuguchi as saying: "I am very excited to work in the Philippines. I look forward to working closely with the Honda team, our dealers, business partners and government sectors. Above all, I will concentrate on building upon the successes of Honda and commit to strengthening Honda's position in the market, by providing our customers quality-built cars and the highest customer satisfaction."

I guess Takano's successor will really infuse new and aggressive objectives for Honda especially in these times when competition has become almost cut-throat.

As Tintin Reyes said: "Our new boss looks really bent on pushing us to scale higher heights in his vision to make Honda even bigger in the country in the months, and even years, to come."

Here's wishing you all the best in your new postings, Lyn and Sekiguchi-san.

* * *

My hat's off to Mitsubishi for its continued rise, if not steady performance, in the tough 2005 FIA-World Rally Championship, garnering the all-important Top 3 positions in the manufacture-points category.

The Mitsubishi Motors Motor Sports WRC team scored points with both its nominated Lancer WRC05s in the Corona Rally México, the third round of the 2005 FIA World Rally Championship. Harri Rovanperä and Risto Pietiläinen fought hard to finish fifth and teammates Gilles and Hervé Panizzi took two points for eighth place. This result marks the fourth consecutive rally that Mitsubishi has brought all its cars to the finish.

Mitsubishi's third successive double points haul from Monte-Carlo, Sweden and now México tied Mitsubishi with Ford on points in the FIA World Rally Championship for Manufacturers, although Mitsubishi took third place in the standings, based on finishing positions this year.

"What a weekend for Mitsubishi Motorsport," said the president of Mitsubishi Motors Motor Sports, Isao Torii. "Yesterday we finished second and fourth at the 3,840 kilometer Cross Country Rally from Argentina to Chile, and today we finished with both WRC cars in the manufacturer points at an exciting Rally México. I am very happy with the overall spirit of both teams because the reliability of our cars is good, we have fulfilled our target and to be equal with Ford in the WRC manufacturers' points table is a great result for Mitsubishi Motors."

SEKIGUCHI

As per Arlan Reyes' notebook, here's some interesting highlights of the race:

"Harri Rovanperä made a steady start to the event but made good progress, despite brake problems on the high altitude stage on leg one. He was unlucky on the start of the second day as electrical problems meant the team had to change the ECU, fuel line and ignition system before he could set off but he collected a 1-min 20-sec penalty after leaving service late. He picked up the pace, setting a fourth fastest time to end the day in fifth, only 1.4 seconds behind Ford's Gardemeister and 36 seconds ahead of reigning World Champion Loeb, who was on a mission after dropping right down the order on leg one. Confident he could overhaul Gardemeister but aware of the pressure from Loeb, Rovanperä powered his way through leg three, setting two fastest stage times."

Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution driver Michael Kahlfuss won the Group N category of Corona Rally México.

Incidentally, our Arlan Reyes of Mitsubishi sent the dispatch in spite of the fact he was still grieving over the death of his mother. Again, Arlan, my family extends its deepest sympathies to you and your loved ones.

* * *

NLEX NOTES. I wish they would stop allowing non-EC Tag owners to use the EC Tag lane. The practice does not only delay EC Tag owners, it also sometimes (some say, most of the time) confuses the memory of the computer reading an EC Tag suddenly passing through it.

* * *

QUOTE ME. With the onset of summer, park your car in the shade. It would help you save on gas as the heat could also cause evaporation of your fuel.

SUCCESSFUL TEST-DRIVE EVENT

AutoFrance Philippines Inc., exclusive distributor of Peugeot vehicles in the Philippines, has successfully staged its test drive event at the Bonifacio Global City Open Field recently. The event gathered motoring journalists and car enthusiasts to test-drive the Peugeot 307 and 206 cc. It also included free picture-taking and distribution of free snacks and tokens. The vehicles received rave reviews.

Voting for Automobile of the Year 2005 People's Choice on

THE PUBLIC may now vote for their favorite vehicles in the Automobile of the Year 2005-People's Choice presented by Michelin, which is sponsored by Manila North Tollways Corp. and Metro Rail Transit.

The event is the first public poll via SMS messaging to be held in the country wherein the public can vote for their favorite vehicle based on their driving needs. Awards will be given in 14 different categories including the prestigious Automobile of the Year-People's Choice, which will go to the vehicle that garners the most number of votes.

The categories are subcompact, compact, midsize and large sedans/station wagons; sports cars; diesel and gas AUVs; compact, midsize and large SUVs; Minivans; full size vans and pickups.

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To get list of categories, text AUTO VOTE <CATEGORY> to the Globe or Smart Access Number. (Example: AUTO VOTE AUVGAS then send to 2214 or 283). To vote, text AUTO VOTE <CATEGORY> <ENTRY>. (Example: AUTO VOTE SUVC XTRAIL then send to 2214 or 283).

For assistance, subscribers can simply text AUTO to the Globe or Smart Access Number or call (02) 813-2353.

Posters and flyers containing a detailed list of categories are available at Metro Rail Transit (MRT). stations, the North Luzon Expressway and some Michelin tire dealers.

The event will feature a display and public test drive by different auto manufacturers and distributors, which will be held on April 16, 17, 23 and 24. The awards night will be held on April 30 at the Fort Bonifacio Global City.

'780 horses' turn heads of smallest Boholanons

From page C1

down and dirty" with the D-Max. And we were given only two short days to frolic in Bohol.

"Taka-taka-taka" ... that old familiar sound of Isuzu engines was a constant companion, as well. This time, though, these sounds were made by 3-liter 4JH1-T direct injection turbo intercooler powerplants, and it easily piled on the kilometers, paved or unpaved, during our Bohol 250-km South-East-Central-West loop.

The trip's start and end point was the Bohol Tropics in Tagbilaran City. From there, we made our way to the Blood Compact site and the century-old Baclayon Church.

Best opportunity

A hilly dirt path at Mount Mayana on Jagna-Sierra Bullones road gave us our best opportunity to test the 4H and 4L drives of the D-Max. Otherwise, the Bohol road network was in generally better-than-average condition, with the major highways well-paved with concrete or asphalt. For most of the way, the motoring journalists were confident enough to test the subtle interplay between the transmission, accelerator and brakes.

Two days on Bohol's roads also made us realize the sheer number of the province's motorbikes, which seem to outnumber all other vehicles on the road.

Thus, we were constantly reminded to take heed of bikers sharing the two-lane highways with us. Our speeds could only go up to 80 kph for safety—and it was a nervous 80 kph. The D-Max, to my delight, was equipped with an antilock brake system (ABS). That gave us added confidence to negotiate our way around blind curves, unruly motorbikers, slow trikes, and even animals crossing the road.

After another rough trail to Carmen, we were able to step out and view hundreds of those bra-shaped Chocolate Hills (pardon the comparison, but that's the best shape I could come up with). It was also in Sagbayan Peak that we were able to get a better view of these hills. Postcard perfect, is all I could say.

Some comparisons

Back in the D-Max, there was still enough time to make some comparisons between the automatic and manual transmission variants. The M/T, I observed, was not as easy to manage as the A/T. I could say it was a bit wilder at heart.

The brute surges in lower gears, which takes some extra effort to tame. In long drives, or in stop-and-go traffic, this could be extra tiring. But in the rough-and-tumble world of 4x4 driving, this character is what we would look for. The A/T, for me, presents the best of both worlds. It feels as if it won't shortchange me in terms of power, and the transmission is seamless. And in lower gears, the system "tames" itself.

In terms of the steering, Isuzu Philippines' Joseph Bautista explained that aside from the advantage of a smaller-turning radius, the rack and pinion steering was chosen for the D-Max over the ball-and-nut type because of its more positive, direct and sporty steering feel.

There were four units with top-of-the-line Clarion and two units with Pioneer stereo. The soothing sound of the Clarion was up to the task except that I didn't find it user-friendly.

The D-Max, I admit, looks more ruggedly handsome than the fine-featured Toyota Hi-Lux. If the two were both muscle-bound guys, the Hi-Lux came straight from the gym program, while the D-Max takes its muscles from years of stevedoring at the pier.

As of this writing, the D-Max still leads its market at a formidable 40 percent. Isuzu retains its reputation as the best diesel pickup maker with its D-Max. For how long? Don't ask the tarsier. It's been around too long to feel excited over a new animal species. And I'm not talking about the D-Max.

Our pedestrian strain

CATCH MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

FILIPINO pedestrians defy logic. Why does it seem that we, as a people, do not understand the lethality of being struck by a moving car? Despite millions of pesos spent by both the local and national governments on pedestrian overpasses, signal lights and instructional signage, Filipinos still cross the road where they are not supposed to and often do so under the most spectacular of circumstances.

Honk your horn at these erring citizens and they look back at you with annoyance. Cars are supposed to give way to people crossing the road, right? I mean it is the polite thing to do. It is the Filipino thing to do. Yet, how can one be courteous to a man trying to cross the South Luzon Expressway with his two children in tow. He obviously deserves to be reprimanded in the most serious manner, if not put in jail for putting the lives of his offspring in danger. If he were alone, death by gravel laden dump truck may have been the most apt penalty, as utter stupidity is not something we want to persist in the Filipino gene pool.

Giving him a break

Let's give our child-toting daredevil a break and the benefit of the doubt. Maybe it is because he never had a proper education. His attempt to play *patintero* with cars hurtling along the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) could also be due to the lack of sufficient government infrastructure. Maybe it was a life or death emergency that caused him to risk being turned into a human skid mark.

Let's tackle the education issue. It does not take a postgraduate education and a Mensa membership card to know what will happen if a two-ton mass of steel, aluminum, rubber and plastic hits you at 100 kilometers per hour (kph). Think about it. Think about it hard. Even a lawnmower traveling at the decent speed of 60 kph could already be logically lethal.

Hitting a sheep

Does our SLEX stuntman need to actually see what occurs to a human body when people get intimate with fenders and bumpers at speed? There is this stunning footage of recently retired WRC (World Rally Championship) driver Carlos "El Matador" Sainz hitting a sheep at semi-full tilt, probably somewhere in the region of 140 kph. White ball of cotton turns into a mist of pink and red, as the sheep apparently explode when the pressure of the internal organs exceeds the tensile strength of the epidermal layer.

Okay then, probably the government is to blame for this man's actions. Surely if there were an overpass in that area, then our favorite highway idiot would not have to risk life and limb to buy rice, sardines, Lotto tickets or his prepaid load. First of all, I'd ask anyone who's even thinking that there is some virtue in this argument to submit to a urine test. A multimillion–peso overpass for this one man? Come on, lay off the mushroom jam or whatever psycho-active substance you are on. This is in no way about marginalization and government inefficiency. It's simply about sheer inanity.

Life or death situation?

There is also the argument that his crossing the highway is due to an emergency, like a life or death situation. That would really be a tragedy as I often travel this section of the SLEX and see him crossing. If our latest premise held true that aside from being stupid, then he's probably the unluckiest man alive. I actually pity him. Any fate that would have me risk my life on almost a weekly basis, would also probably drive me suicidal; hence, the apparent death wish.

Our disgust at ambivalent pedestrians need not be triggered by people as extreme as our SLEX specimen. Every day, thousands of more educated, sensible and apparently lucky Filipinos risk their lives attempting to cross into the path of on-rushing traffic. I personally wish they'd keep to the sidewalk and the pedestrian crossings. I keep my car on the road, where it is designated to be and don't drive it on the sidewalk. How would we feel if cars suddenly begin to run amok among the vendors and stalls that dot our sidewalks?

Equal treatment

There also has to be equality in punishment and treatment by law enforcement. When I incur a traffic violation, the nice blue/yellow/gray uniformed man takes my license away, so maybe they should take jaywalking pedestrians' *cedulas* (residence certificates), company IDs or their money—anything to make the violation as much of a hassle as it is for drivers.

Changing the mind-set of the Filipino pedestrian is a monumental yet very possible task. I would immediately target the youth and educate them on the physical hazards of jaywalking. Short stays at the local police precinct will probably teach even the most hardened pedestrians a good lesson. People attempting to cross major thoroughfares like Edsa, C5 or the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX)/SLEX should be meted out harsh punishment, like televised humiliation during popular noon time shows. Let us hope it does not have to come to this. Anyway, if all else fails, we have that spectacular exploding sheep video to resort to.

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An award winner is upgraded

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

SURPRISE, surprise! The car that won the Best Luxury Sedan title in the first Philippine Car of the Year (Coty) Awards is Swedish, not German. But would you believe that the manufacturer of the car that bested the BMW 530d and the Mercedes E240 Avantgarde has improved it even further? Volvo has actually upgraded the award-winning S60 T5 for 2005.

The subtle exterior changes for 2005—bi-xenon crystal headlamps; a softer, rounded-off nose; a wider, restyled grille; reshaped, aerodynamic bumpers with chrome accents; body-colored side and bumper moldings instead of black strips; clear-lens reflector taillights—give the redesigned S60 T5 a sleeker yet more athletic stance.

Muscular

But this is not just a facelift. The muscular new look offers a clue to the upgraded power lurking quietly under the hood. The capacity of the 5-cylinder, twin cam, 20-valve, high pressure turbo engine mated to a 5-speed Geartronic automatic transmission has been increased from 2.3 to 2.4 liters, peak output is up from 250 bhp to 260 bhp at 5,200 rpm and max torque by 20 Nm to 350 Nm at 2,400–5,200 rpm. With more torque at lower revs complementing the extra 10 horsepower, the result is a top speed of 250 kph (kilometer per hour) and zero to 100 kph acceleration in a sizzling 6.9 seconds.

Stopping power is adequately supplied by larger ventilated disc brakes and calipers up front and solid discs at the rear with 4-channel ABS and EBD. Being a front-wheel-drive car, the S60 T5 does not tackle corners as neatly as a rear-wheel-drive would and shows a bit of body lean when going through bends at high speed. The S60 T5, after all, is first and foremost a luxury sedan, so its suspension is tuned for comfort, not hard cornering.

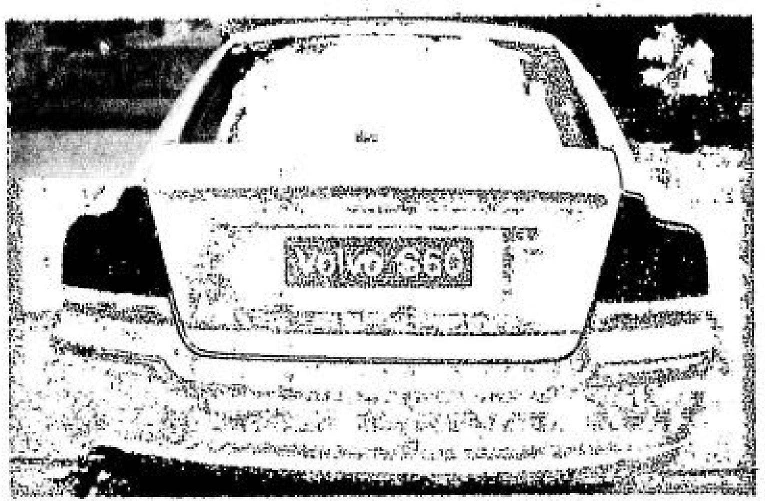
Turbocharged

Nonetheless, the sporty Swede remains balanced and steady when gunning forward, turbocharged, to reach its top speed of 250 kph. DSTC (dynamic stability and traction control) assures the driver of stability even on slippery roads.

MacPherson struts and coil springs up front and multilink independent suspension with coil springs at the rear, plus hydraulic shock absorbers and stabilizer bars front and rear provide a ride quality befitting a luxury car. The 17-inch alloy wheels are shod with 225/45 17 tires.

Riding comfort is enhanced by the quiet performance of the engine, almost nil road and wind noise, and interior changes that make motoring more relaxing for driver and passengers alike. The driver's and front seats are electronically adjustable. Also provided are dual-zone air-conditioning in front and B-pillar vents for rear passengers, an integrated GSM phone, reading lamps front and rear, a cabin pollen filter and IAQS (interior air quality system), front and rear cupholders and slimmer rear headrests that fold electronically when the driver presses a button on the dash. Leather, of course, is a given along with illuminated vanity mirrors and split-folding rear backrest.

BI-XENON crystal headlamps, a softer nose and chrome accents distinguish the 2005 S60 T5 from its predecessor. PHOTOS BY AIDA SEVILLA-MENDOZA



CLEAR-LENS taillights, a reshaped rear bumper with chrome trim and reverse warning system are new in the 2005 Volvo S60 T5.

LEATHER is a given inside the S60 T5 with aluminum inlays and chrome trim.

Esthetic

For esthetic interior changes, there are aluminum inlays aside from the aluminum-framed central control panel and chromium-edged instrument dials. For convenience, audio and cruise control paddles are located on the steering wheel, the rearview mirror automatically dims and a trip computer and driver information display keep the driver posted. An all-new, multifunctional tunnel console with rolltop drawer and a redesigned, flexible armrest offer deep storage bins and extra cupholders. The upgraded audio consists of an AM/FM tuner with integrated six-CD player, nine loudspeakers and Dolby Pro Logic II surround sound system.

On the other hand, while the redesigned seats are more supportive, legroom for rear seat passengers still needs improvement. The rakish, coupé-like angle of the roof may have compromised space efficiency somewhat for back seat occupants.

Safest

The S60 T5 would be incomplete without the full range of safety features that make the Volvo one of the safest cars in the world. Aside from DSTC, ABS, EBD and driver and front passenger SRS airbags, it has as standard equipment inflatable side curtains, side-impact airbags, side-impact protection system (SIPS), whiplash protection seating system, anti-submarine seats, collapsible steering column, 3-point seatbelts with auto pretensioners for all five seats, keyless entry with central locking, alarm system, and engine immobilizer, two-step door opening and automatic door unlock in a crash. The jet headlamp washers, water-repellent side-view mirrors, reverse warning system and front and rear fog lamps can be considered safety equipment, too.

POWER upgrade: 260 bhp and 250 Nm give the 2.4-liter, 5 cylinder turbocharged S60 T5 a top speed of 250 kph.

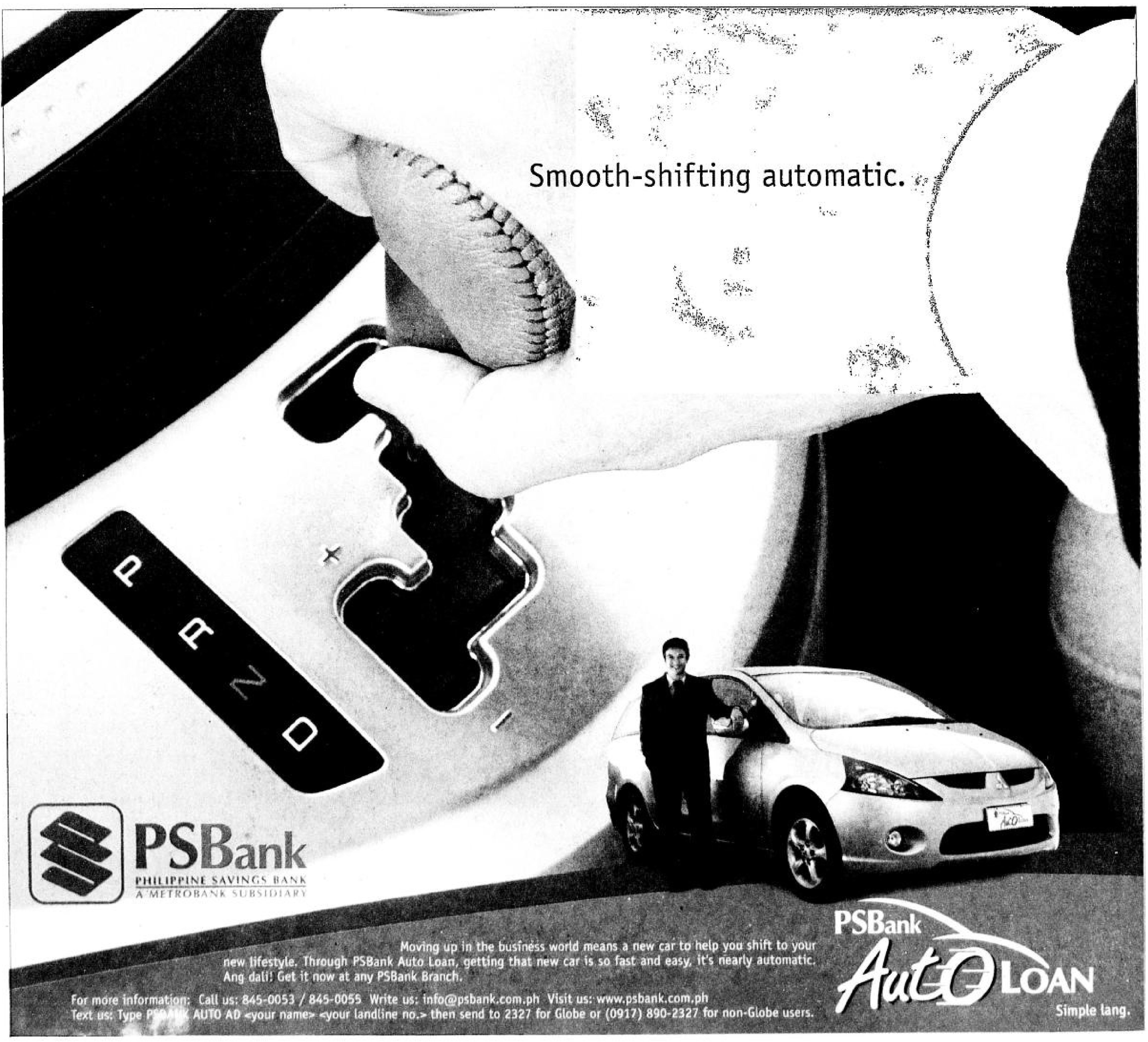
Summing up, the new S60 T5 is faster, more elegant, better balanced, more comfortable and more safety-oriented than ever. It looks ready to win the Best Luxury Sedan award again for Volvo in next year's Coty contest. What's more, for prospective buyers, there is the price factor: this Volvo costs P2.795 million, almost two million pesos less than its 2.5-liter, 6-cylinder Teutonic rival.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Accepting Jesus is only good for eternity.

* * *

(E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph)



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KITCHIE NADAL
The hottest rock princess

By Neil Ray Ramos
2bU! Contributor

NO DOUBT, Kitchie Nadal is currently the hottest female rock act in the local music scene. Heck, one could actually go a notch further and declare her the hottest ever since, well, '70s Pinoy rock icon Sampaguita herself. And for good reason as Nadal have all the necessary credentials to back it all up: a platinum selling album; a number one single with the still very popular "'Wag Na Wag Mong Sasabihin'" and a second one ("Bulong") fast catching up on its heels; a slew of gigs all over the archipelago; and now, a hotly anticipated concert at Araneta Coliseum with the biggest band in the land, Rivermaya.

How did this all come about really? Is Kitchie Nadal for real? And how long will her reign last?

It wasn't very long ago when everybody was expecting Cookie Chua to succeed Sampaguita as Queen of Pinoy Rock, and Kitchie was just one of a handful of next-generation female rockers fronting male-dominated rock bands along with Acel Bisa of Moonstar88 and Brownbeat All Star's Myra Ruaro.

Of course, back then, there were already a number of believers who predicted that Nadal could do better solo than being in Mojofly, her pretty face and winsome voice notwithstanding. Given that thought however, not too many expected that she could be this big.

Kitchie herself revealed she hardly knew anything about music prior to joining Mojofly on a "whim" a couple of years ago. The only experience she had, she said, before joining the band was singing for friends at home.

Short stint with Mojofly

Nadal admits she did enjoy her short stint with Mojofly, however, her commitments with the band took its toll on her schooling. "I had to compromise," she confides.

Eventually, she left Mojofly to concentrate on her studies [double degree in Psychology and Education]. "The rest of the guys knew about it. At the onset, they knew that schooling was my priority. They understood," she said.

Kitchie studied for almost a year after Mojofly. But she continued listening to music including those of Queen, Fiona Apple and Skunk Anansie. Inspired, she began writing songs again.

"My musical rebirth coincided with my spiritual quest," she said admitting that "Deliverance," one of the first songs she ever wrote after her self-imposed sabbatical, was illustrative of this.

"It was my way of asking God to be my savior. I was practically lost and asked for help," she explained. Not too many know that Nadal is a very active member of her church group, The Victory Christian Fellowship. "A big part of my music is my newfound faith," she said.

Stronger musical direction

According to Nadal, her positive spiritual life helped her musical direction get stronger, especially lyrically. "I speak out more. I could express my thoughts the way I want," she enthused.

Apparently many agree, as "Deliverance" and its follow-up "Run," both released independently, were certified hits, enjoying

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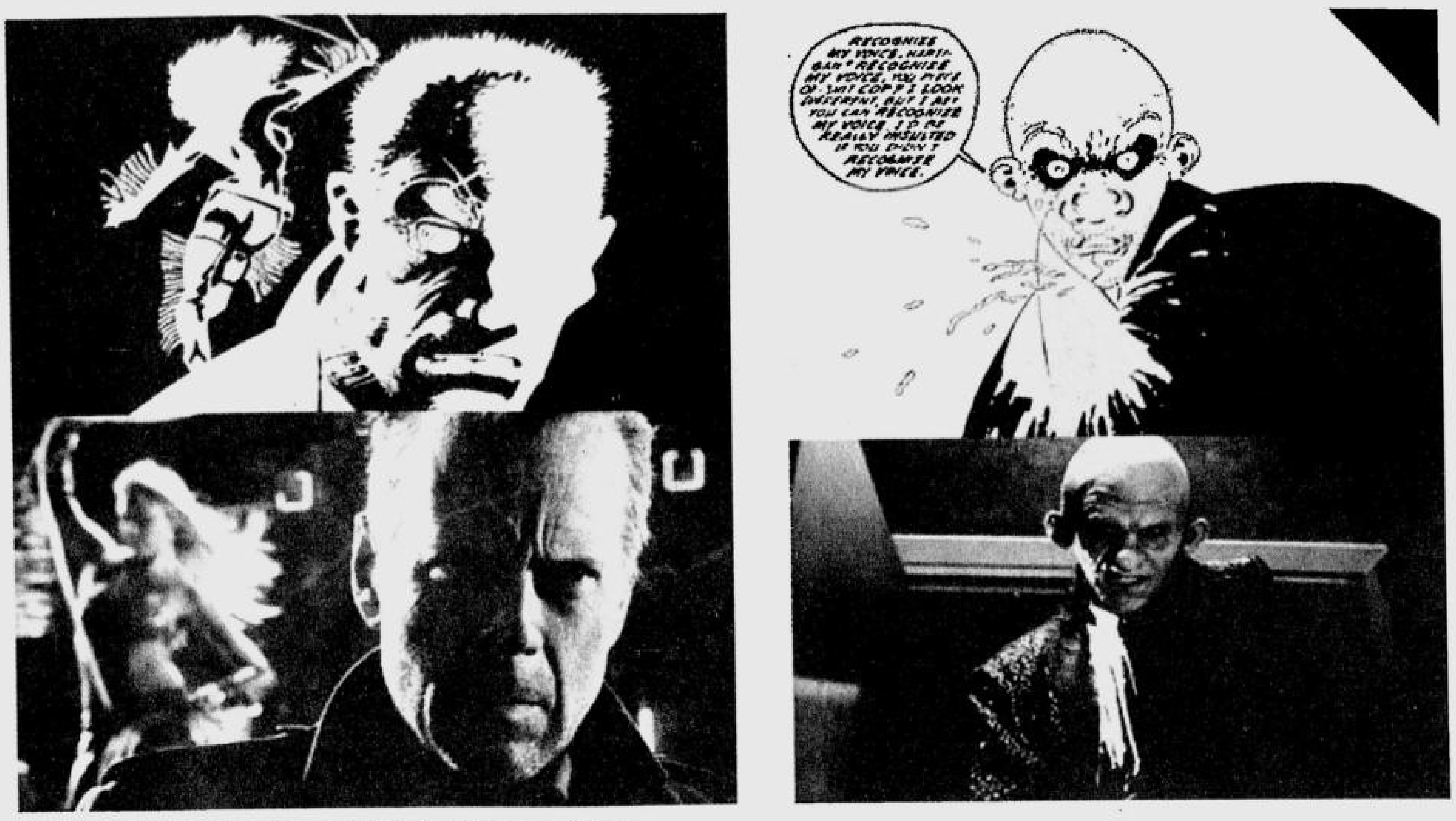
A city well worth the trip

"Sin City"

Directed by Robert Rodriguez, Frank Miller and Quentin Tarantino

Starring Mickey Rourke, Bruce Willis, Clive Owen, Rosario Dawson, Jessica Alba, Carla Gugino, Elijah Wood, Rutger Hauer, Michael Clarke Duncan, Brittany Murphy, Nick Stahl, Michael Madsen, Powers Boothe, Benicio Del Toro, Jaime King and Devon Aoki

By Adrian Dy
2bU! Correspondent


RECOGNIZE MY VOICE, HARTIGAN? RECOGNIZE MY VOICE, YOU PIECE OF SHIT COP? I LOOK DIFFERENT, BUT I BET YOU CAN RECOGNIZE MY VOICE. I'D BE REALLY INSULTED IF YOU DIDN'T RECOGNIZE MY VOICE.

THE DIRECTORS have tried to stay as faithful to the comic as possible.

SIN CITY" is far from your typical movie. It's an intense cinematic experience that draws you into its environs, with a star-studded cast that delivers grade-A performances and, strangely enough for a movie that offers much sexuality and violence, a series of stories full of heart.

Basin City is ruled by two brothers. One is a cardinal and the other a senator. It's a hotbed of crime, home to some of the most corrupt cops and wicked call girls in the world, a place that's no stranger to violent death.

It's a richly crafted black and white CGI city reminiscent of the backdrops to the movie "Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow." Rain pours endlessly in what seems like eternal night.

"Sin City" is of course, based on the graphic novels of the same name created by Frank Miller, who rose to fame by writing what many people call the definitive Daredevil run in the latter part of the 1980s. He quickly followed that up with "The Dark Knight Returns" at DC, which, along with Alan Moore's "Watchmen," brought a newfound sense of maturity, realism, and grit to the comic world.

On the other side of the creative end, director Robert Rodriguez has an unusual pedigree, having done the "Spy Kids" trilogy, as well as "Desperado" and the gorefest that is "From Dusk 'Til Dawn."

Black and white

Working hand in hand with Miller and Rodriguez is Quentin Tarantino (who guest-directs a segment with a talking head). This trinity has produced what is perhaps the most faithful comic book adaptation there is for now. Scenes from the movie perfectly mirror panels from the comic book. Filmed mostly in black and white, mimicking the ink drawings of Miller (with a few exceptions of course, like the stunning red of an evening gown in the first scene. Blood, the Yellow Bastard and others are set apart by bright color), the movie is an excellent revival of the noir genre.

It also brings with it, thanks most likely to Tarantino, a "Kill Bill" sensibility to its violence. For the more squeamish of you out there, be prepared to flinch at the menagerie of brutal acts depicted here, from cannibalism, lacerations, mutilations and decapitations to even a castration. In "Sin City," blood doesn't just spray, it fountains.

SILENT, deadly, and can give The Bride a run for her money

The holy trinity of Frank Miller, Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino have come up with perhaps the most faithful movie adaptation of a comic book there is, for now

And of course, there's the women—an overabundance of them, in fact. Luckily for any red-blooded male, they are almost all hookers, and quite partial to appearing topless. To call them sex objects, however, would be to downplay their worth, since the three main tales in "Sin City" all involve a beautiful angel.

The movie kicks off with Josh Hartnett's unnamed character, who serves merely to start and end the movie. "Sin City" uses another Tarantino staple, the multiple storyline, to full effect. Up first is the story of Marv (Mickey Rourke), a big hulking bruiser with a diminished intellect, a heart of gold, and a single-minded determination to avenge a murdered hooker.

It is a quest that might just lead him to the grave, as it pits him against a terrifying serial killer (Elijah Wood, who embodies creepiness), a cardinal with more influence than you can shake a stick at, and even the ghost of the aforementioned prostitute.

The lengths that Rourke's character goes to avenge his bloody one-night stand are almost epic. It is the typical noir story of a man against the world. Despite his chiseled appearance, Marv is not made of stone, and he delivers some of the movie's funniest lines, which turns him into an unexpectedly tragic figure in the end.

Willis a delight

In a more up-front tale of corruption in the city, good cop Hartigan (Bruce Willis) manages to save a young girl from being raped by a senator's son. In the ensuing cover-up, the crime gets pinned on Hartigan himself and he is sent to jail.

Hartigan is released after eight years, only to discover that the girl is now being targeted by the senator's son yet again, who has managed to cheat death but at a huge price.

This is the type of role Willis can do with his eyes closed, but it is still a delight to see him at work. Sure, Jessica Alba (chosen for her looks, obviously), who plays the grown-up version of the little girl, has absolutely no chemistry with Willis whatsoever. But Willis oozes drive and determination all over the movie.

Lastly, Dwight (Clive Owen) saves Brittany Murphy from being abused by her boyfriend (Benicio del Toro), only to discover that his actions have destroyed a shaky alliance between the police, the town's prostitutes (led by Rosario Dawson) and a bunch of gangsters.

This is the most action-packed of the three stories, thanks mostly to Sin City's own samurai-slash-prostitute, Miho (Devin Aoki), whose death toll can rival Uma Thurman's character, the Bride, in the "Kill Bill" movies.

And surprise, surprise, it also has an applause-garnering performance from Alexis Bledel, best known as the smart-ass daughter in "Gilmore Girls," who plays seemingly innocent but scheming prostitute Becky. The last scene in the movie, between her and Hartnett, really sums up the spirit of the movie, and is the signal for moviegoers to finally exhale after a jolting two-hour ride.

"Sin City" is truly an odd duck in today's field of movies. The internal monologues of the characters have an almost Shakespearean feel to them, and the stark sense of grim foreboding that the visuals evoke really sets "Sin City" apart.

And, for all its scenes of sheer splatter and sexuality, it is a movie about honor and justice, as its characters fight to remain true to their moral code by taking matters into their own hands when the system fails or betrays them.

SIN CITY
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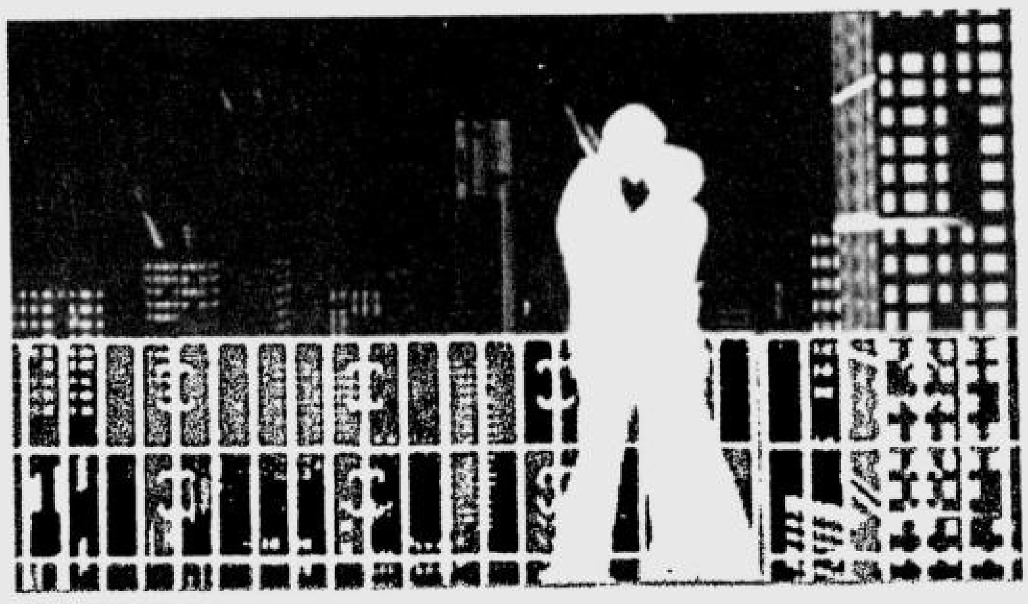
BRUISED and bandaged, Marv is the typical noir hero



WHEN was the last time you saw a flick in black and white?

The hottest rock princess

From page D1

massive airplay from various radio stations. It eventually started a frenzy among record labels. Ultimately, Warner Music won, co-producing the album with 12 Stone Records. And the rest as the cliché goes, is pop history.

Wanting to know about how she writes her songs, we asked Nadal how she came up with "'Wag na 'Wag Mong Sasabihin."

"It's a break-up song. I wrote it from personal experience. It's about love having to have integrity. Godly integrity," she intones.

Mentioning to her that we recently heard that a priest once used the song in a homily about unconditional love, Nadal said she perfectly understood the thought.

"I understand that. We all know that there are different levels of how we can show our love. And I believe the best ever is love with absolute truth in its core," she said.

Of course, the video for the song was an altogether different matter, what with that "surprising" ending with actor, Onemig Bondoc.

"Yeah, people reacted strongly to that," Nadal laughs. "He [Onemig] is my friend. Management thought it cool for him to appear in the video. The idea was to make the video very different. It was okay for me as it helped propel the song. People noticed," she adds.

Visual music

As for the song "Bulong," Nadal said it's all about the youth and how most of them are struggling for identity. "It's me telling them to stop and listen. It's about knowing what's right but still not choosing to do it," she explained.

Nadal said she writes most of her songs with her trusty Danelectro electric guitar. "I write songs as if they're dreams; it's not really clear but it's sort of visual," she explained.

Interestingly, Nadal is toying with the idea of using indigenous instruments on the new batch of songs she is composing. Already, an example of this interest could be gleamed in her revival of Orient Pearl's classic "Pagsubok," for ABS-CBN's "Kamao."

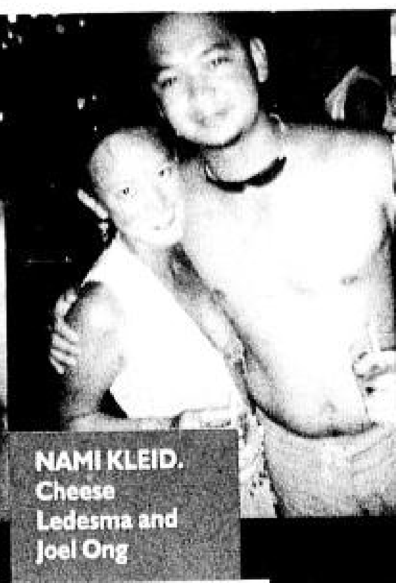
Currently, Nadal is busy preparing for her upcoming concert on April 15. She is set to perform with Rivermaya and Spongecola in what many consider her biggest undertaking ever of her career at the newly-refurbished Araneta Coliseum.

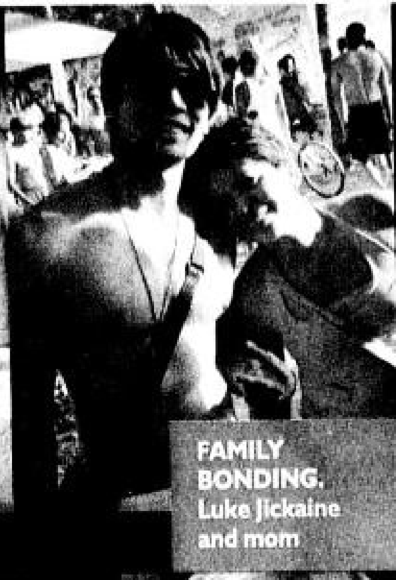
"I'm taking all of this as a blessing. I never expected this [the concert]. Just as I didn't expect "Deliverance" or "'Wag na 'Wag Mong Sasabihin" to take off like they did. I'm just happy to be able to do this," she said.

Amen to that.

JUDE'S ARIA. Jun Jun Poblador and Bianca Araneta

ABS N' FAB. Dara Cadness and Andrew Wolff


NAMI KLEID. Cheese Ledesma and Joel Ong


FAMILY BONDING. Luke Jickaine and mom

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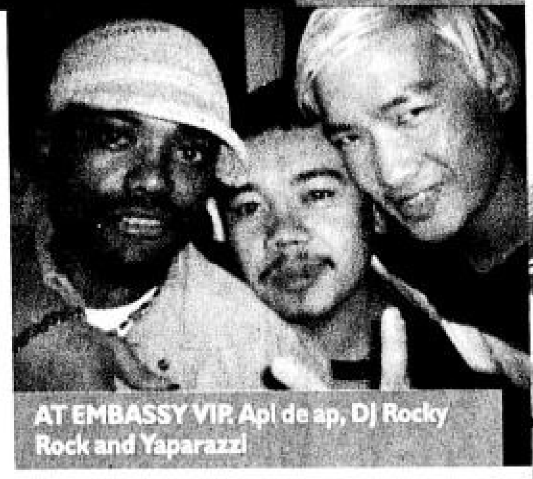
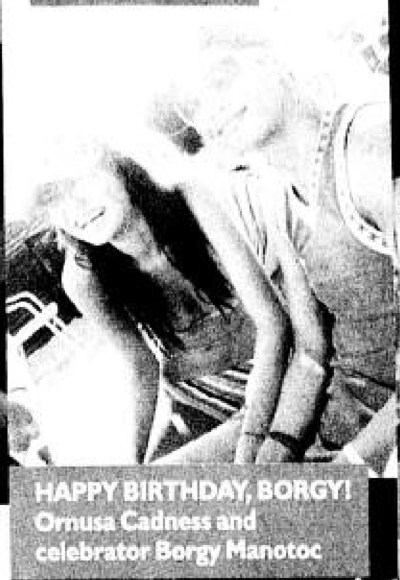

AT EMBASSY VIP. Apl de ap, DJ Rocky Rock and Yaparazzi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Love affair with my bed

Tim Yap

LAST week, the unthinkable happened. No, I didn't have a sex video scandal. The Pope didn't rise from the dead nor did **Camilla** and **Charles** reschedule again their altar date (yay!). For the first time in many, many years (I think the last time was when I was in second grade), I got sick. Not pretend-so-I-can-be-absent-sick, not love sick or homesick, but really, really sick—I was bedridden.

Heard there was a virus that went around town and before I knew it—bam! I was one of its casualties.

I love my home, don't get me wrong, but I've never stayed home this long for quite some time. Now I know how **Macaulay Culkin** felt, minus **Michael Jackson** (then again, Jacko seems like good company—but I digress.) Just when I thought that my pop-culture radar would be turned off and I'd have peace and serenity at home, my phone, even on silent mode, made so much noise that it still screamed for attention. (I guess the phone is as "KSP" as its owner.)

My friend told me that "just when you think that the world has stopped, it comes banging on your door," and true enough, despite being down, down, down with the flu, I still acted as a human call center—picking up calls and text messages for people who want to go clubbing, listening to the latest bit of gossip, giving advice to the lonely and heartbroken—the price I have to pay for being too much in the loop.

Just as I was about to sleep (early because I was sick), it just so happened that there was a Parokya ni Edgar concert that decided to erupt in my neighborhood, and I was kept awake and dancing in bed till 4 a.m.! And I was not even in Bora. I may be in the loop, but I thought any more noise and I was about to turn loopy.

Despite my body crying foul, on my first day of high fever, I was still able to work out, go to the Kiehl's dinner hosted by L'Oreal (yup, the organic cosmetic giant is coming to Manila) and do a three-layout print shoot. The next day, I couldn't move anymore. Lesson learned—don't abuse your body.

Pillow countdown

Anyway, aside from having a love affair with my bed and having good books by my side, here are some random pillow pickings that have made me endure this feverish week—hot, hot, hot!

1. **Piolo Pascual**'s sex video scandal. Okay, relax. I haven't seen it and really, I don't intend to. I do not think Piolo would have the balls (pardon the pun) to have himself recorded knowing his status in the biz. It just goes to show that people from this industry focus more on scandals than a person's achievements. Poor Piolo.

2. "I also missed Fashion Week not because I was sick but because no one invited me. Except **Kate Torralba**," the sad but true statement of former Mega editor **Liza Ilarde**. Guys, let's not be ungrateful here. The fashion industry may seem to be a fickle and frivolous lot, but let's not forget friendships that were formed along the way. Shame, shame, shame!

3. **Angel Locsin** looks great as Darna. A lot of people have noticed, because a lot of people thought Angel was unnoticeable. It's all a matter of styling, and great lighting, really.

4. "No matter how manly they are, when they get sick, they all become babies!" said **Jenni Epperson**, referring to hubby **Tom**'s behavior every time he gets sick.

5. In that regard, Jenni, in true **Bernie Maxwell** fashion, has learned to concoct "for-the-sick-baby-boy" dishes like chicken noodle soup and chicken noodle soup, which I must say, is really good for the soul. **Celine Lopez**'s maid makes a mean paella which is my forever feel-good food. Okay, yes, I had too much carbs this week, so kill me.

6. Some guy named **Mike Pressler** allegedly grabbed all four of **Gwen Garci**'s and **Maui Taylor**'s future perfect assets before running away from the dance club where the two bombshells hang out. He even broke a beer bottle on **Andrew Wolff** (Gwen's steady) and then the bouncers whisked him away. Whoa! Is chivalry dead?

I guess so. The last I heard of this guy, he was singing verses from "The Sound of Music"—"The hills are alive... are alive... are alive..."

7. That once you come back from Bora, the number of days it takes for anyone to recover is equal to the number of days you were there. Some people are still into their recovery from Hed Kandi as I write this.

8. That no one believes me when I say I'm sick. I still got countless phone calls to go to this and that event, do this and that shoot. When I would respond telling them how sick I was, they would reiterate their plea for me to attend, "even just for a while, you don't have to stay..." They would continue to plead. "Didn't you hear what I just said, 'I'm sick!!!'

I wanted to scream, but that would just make my health condition worse, so I would channel my inner Bugs Bunny and just cough into the receiver and go, Kerrooaak, Kerrooaaak.

After seven days in purgatory, thank heaven that this flu has come to pass—I now feel so Super! once again.

In a microwave world where everything has to happen right *now*, sometimes it is also refreshing to step back and chill by the freezer before deciding to step back into the action once again. Yay!

Sabbatical's over. I'm finally out... of the bedroom.

E-mail me at supertim@pldtdsl.net

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Makeovers in a jiffy

Vanity Fare

Lora Gahol

I'VE HEARD it so many times: Change is the only thing that's constant in this world. And sure, I believed it. But I was mystified at how there wasn't much evidence of it on my looks!

I'm sure all of us have felt this way at one time or another. Our looks, after all, can only change as far as an outfit or 'do (or plastic surgery, but we wouldn't want you to go that far) can bring us.

But rather than this being a limitation, why don't we make it work to our advantage?

We're not talking Extreme Makeover here. The truth is, no one needs drastic measures to feel like new every day. Makeovers, on the other hand, usually take more time than the regular person can afford to spare on a daily basis, so there's no way you can make over yourself from Monday through Sunday.

The good news is, there are little tricks you can do to tweak the way you look, so you have a fresh, new you to show the world each day. Start small, and soon you'll be building a habit that won't just make you change the way you look in the mirror, but the way you look at yourself.

> There are little tricks you can do to tweak the way you look, so you have a fresh, new you to show the world each day

Hair yeah!

Chop it off. Yes, go ahead, by all means. You've been tying it up and leaving it down for so long now, you can almost hear a collective sigh from your strands the moment you take out a hairbrush.

You've tried curling it, layering it, adding bangs—but none of these have made you feel good about your mane. Worse, you've damaged your tresses to a fried, chemically-treated state.

I say, don't hesitate and go for the chop. I did. (More on my fabulous 12-inch chop in another column!) Hair damage is the best reason to let the hair go, so if you have more split ends and dry strands than deep conditioning treatments can handle, book an appointment now.

I went to Rene of Prive Salon in West Avenue. He's a whiz at precision cutting (my hair has been growing out really nicely), and charges a very reasonable price. The best thing about the cut? Too many!

Not only do I feel like I can resurrect my hair back to life (bye-bye damage!), I look taller (the length works better with my proportions), thinner (surprise! Short hair apparently highlights my facial contours and makes my cheekbones stand out more. Showing off a long neck is also very flattering), younger (people have said I have a "lighter," fresher aura), and very different—in a good way.

And, oh, did I mention that since I can do so many things with my new style, I actually plan my outfits around my 'do. How's that for a change?

Like your hair but need a quick pick-me-up? Strands feeling a little limp? Work some magic into the 'do by changing your part. Your entire look will enjoy a sneaky little boost with almost zero effort.

Cowlicks and baby hair bothering you? All you need is a little anti-frizz serum or light hair gel (Apivita's Propoline Hair Gel for kids leaves no residue and smells delish!) and you're done.

Or how about making a mess? Just get out of the '50s, let go of the whole not-a-strand-out-of-place look and just let your hair do its thing without lethal straightening irons and heavy products.

If you're living the wash-and-wear life, you're on the right track. All you need is some hair wax if you have short hair (Osis has the best-smelling one!) and mousse if you have long hair (Kerastase Resistance gives hair amazing texture while caring for your strands). From there, it's scrunch 'n' go.

Face value

Try a new lip shade! It's the easiest, fastest, I-don't-need-a-mirror way to liven up your face.

Don't automatically reach for your reddest lipstick, though. Try a juicy coral shade like Maybelline Fruity Jelly in Peach Candy, or a pink with a yummy sheen like Nivea Lip Care in Pearly Rose. You'll be surprised how unexpected colors can pretty you up in a flash.

More of a blush lady? Go for a different look! If you've been sporting the rosy-cheeked look for as long as you can remember, go peach! You'll look fresh as a daisy without the sweet-sixteen, cotton-candy flush.

I Nuovi has a great shade called Cheek that most makeup artists swear by. It has a great flesh tone with some warmth to it. If you're a liquid blush fan, try Penshoppe Face It Cheek Tint in Peach. It comes in a cool gel formula that's perfect for the summer.

No need for smoky eyes, either, to make an impact. Liner-phobes and eye shadow newbies can make beautiful eyes with one tool: mascara.

Yep, these days, mascara formulations are so light, you can afford to wear them during the day without turning your lashes into spider legs. To bring attention to your peepers, apply a coat of volumizing and lengthening mascara on curled lashes. Try Maybelline XXL Mascara for amazingly fattened up lashes without the smudge.

Another trick for a "new look?" Get a tan! If you can't run to the beach to bake, try the next best thing: self-tanner! A bronzed look does wonders, as it gives you a healthy-looking complexion that glows sans makeup, instantly camouflages dark circles and discoloration, makes you look slimmer and complements the color of Asian hair (it picks up the brown highlights in black hair).

Try Lancome Flash Bronzer. The "flash" is there for a reason.

Lancome and Apivita are available at Rustan's; Maybelline, Nivea available at PCX; I Nuovi available at Watson's; Penshoppe Face It at Penshoppe branches; Kerastase at select salons; Osis at selected salons; Salon Prive is located at West Avenue, Quezon City.

E-mail the author at lora_gahol@yahoo.com

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RESTO OF THE WEEK

The (steak) doctor is in

Join Steak MD's big cookout on Friday and enjoy all the steaks you can eat

ANG CHARUB. Sweet and spicy

Text and photos by Pam Pastor

MONIBEL Juliette Tabora-Dychiao has been grilling steaks all her life. "My family loves to grill. Two weeks rarely pass without us having a cookout at home."

So we probably shouldn't be surprised that she decided to open a steak restaurant.

This marketing graduate from Assumption College is not new to business. She used to manage a toy and a corporate giveaways business before deciding to open her restaurant.

Steak MD, which opened last Dec. 5, is a dream fulfilled for Monibel. "I've been wanting to open something like this since college."

But why steak?

"The vision is to offer this kind of food to our target market. Steak connotes fine dining, big dates. People think you have to dress up to eat steak when in reality, a steak meal shouldn't cost much more than a chicken meal."

In her desire to bring steak to the masses, Monibel decided to provide a venue where they can enjoy their steak al fresco for unbelievably affordable prices.

Unlike other steak places that capitalize on the sidings they

THE (STEAK)/ E2

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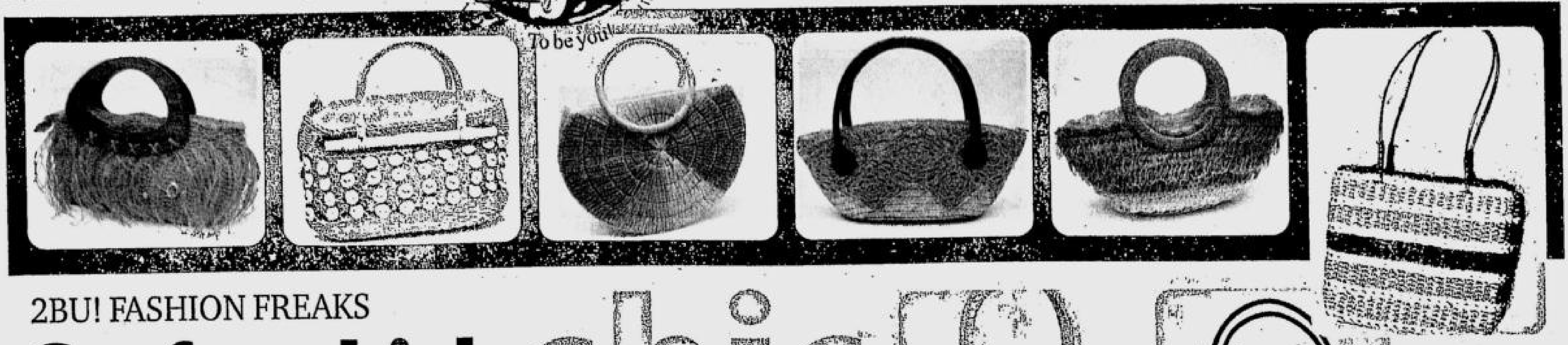


2BU! FASHION FREAKS

Surfer chick chic

Text by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Betoy Johnson and Raffy Lerma

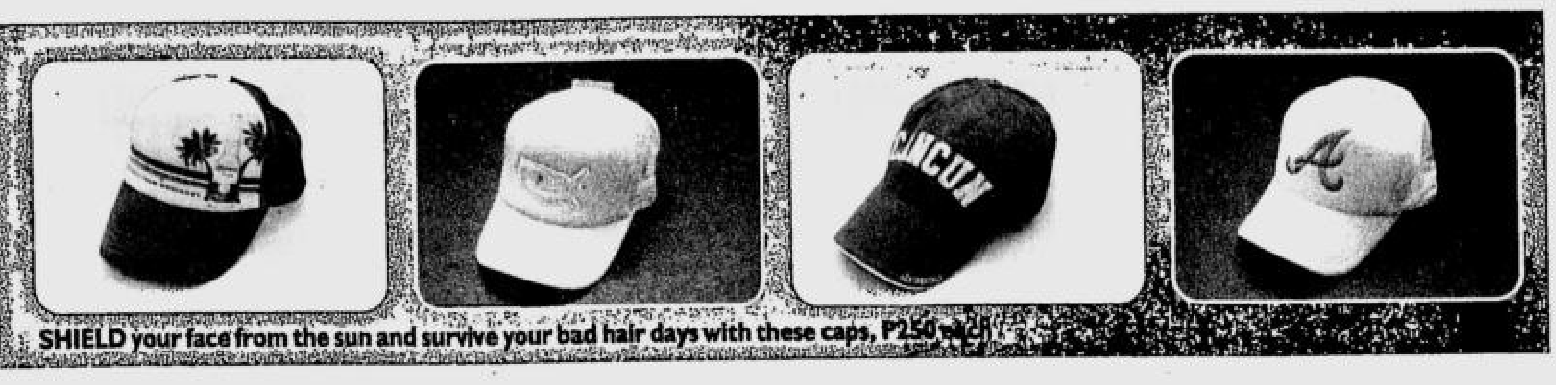
HOT SUMMER bags, P350 to P400

CERTIFIED beach bum Thea Ventura has decided to sell summer essentials such as board shorts, caps and straw bags to finance her trips to the beach. "That way, instead of bumming around, I get to earn my own money [for doing something I love."

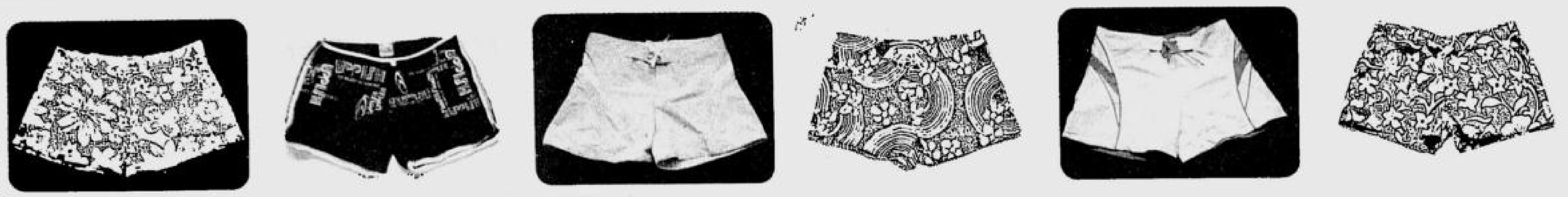
Her collection includes Roxy-inspired board shorts in various prints, beach bags in a cocktail of colors (made of materials such as abaca, shells, crochet and beads), and trendy baseball and trucker caps.

The best part? The prices! Board shorts are P120 each; caps, P250; huge beach bags, P350-400. You can have the surfer girl look without the high price.

For more photos, visit http://pg.photos.yahoo.com/ph/theaventura19/my_photos Call Thea at 0922-4308084 or 09279182661.



SHIELD your face from the sun and survive your bad hair days with these caps, P250 each



STRUT around the beach in these ultra-fab, ultra-affordable boardhorts, P120 each

The (steak) doctor is in

From page E1

offer, Monibel puts the focus on the meat.

"My dad taught me that. And I noticed that when people eat steak, they ask for hot sauce, Knorr or extra seasoning."

Not wanting people to do the same in her restaurant, she decided to make sure her steaks are flavorful enough to please the Pinoy palate.

Enter the rubs

Researching about rubs, she was surprised to discover that there were countless types, a lot of them named after their creators. In the end, Monibel decided to use her own recipes, recipes she knows Pinoys would appreciate.

Steak MD offers charbroiled porterhouse or t-bone steaks in four different rubs. Rub Ko To, which is Steak MD's original house rub, is a blend of different secret spices that will surely satisfy your tastebuds. Heart Rub, Steak MD's garlic rub, gives garlic lovers a dose without being too overpowering. Ang Charub is sweet and spicy— an adventure for the palate. Atomic Rub, which is hot and spicy, is a must-try for thrill-seekers. Believe it or not, each good serving of steak is only P120.

Other must-order from Steak MD's menu are the *liempo* (P70), *sisig* (P60) and the unforgettable baby back ribs (P95). Steak MD's special rice shouldn't be missed too—it's perfect with the steak.

Everything on the menu was selected by Monibel. The recipes are her own—including that of the gravy and steak sauce. Monibel is very hands on when it comes to her restaurant. Gone are her days of parties, she now spends a lot of time in the kitchen, checking to see that everything is working properly. She has said goodbye to her fashion magazine subscriptions and instead reads magazines for entrepreneurs to enrich her knowledge on business even more. Monibel tastes a steak from each batch to make sure that it meets her standards. She never gets tired of it and actually chooses a new favorite every week.

Hard work but fun

It's hard work but it's fun for Monibel. "I like entertaining people, I like throwing parties." On Friday, Monibel will get the chance to entertain during Steak MD's first big party for steaklovers—The Great Cookout, which is open to the public.

A reggae band will play while steak lovers indulge in three different meal packages. That's also when Steak MD will launch their sidings (chili, mashed potato, coleslaw, corn on the cob...). Package 1 (P350) includes a Steak for the Big Boy (extra big and extra juicy, for sure), two sidings and three beers, Package 2 (P250) includes regular steak, one siding and two beers and Package 3 gives you access to as many steaks as you can eat. There will be games too, including a steak-eating contest for big boys who weigh 200 pounds or more.

"We want to be known as steak doctors. Our goal is to cure the cravings of each Pinoy," Monibel said.

And it's obvious that Monibel has a lot of willing patients. Steak MD serves steak to an average of 150 people a day on weekdays and 170 to 220 people on weekends.

Monibel also offers catering for a minimum of 50 people. In the future, she intends to open more branches. "Ninety-nine branches to go," she said, her eyes twinkling. She's looking into Ortigas, Katipunan and Makati for the next ones. Soon, Steak MD will also be open for franchising too. But Monibel is quick to stress that every branch will provide a different dining experience. "In every branch there will be new rubs. Only the quality, service and ambience will be the same."

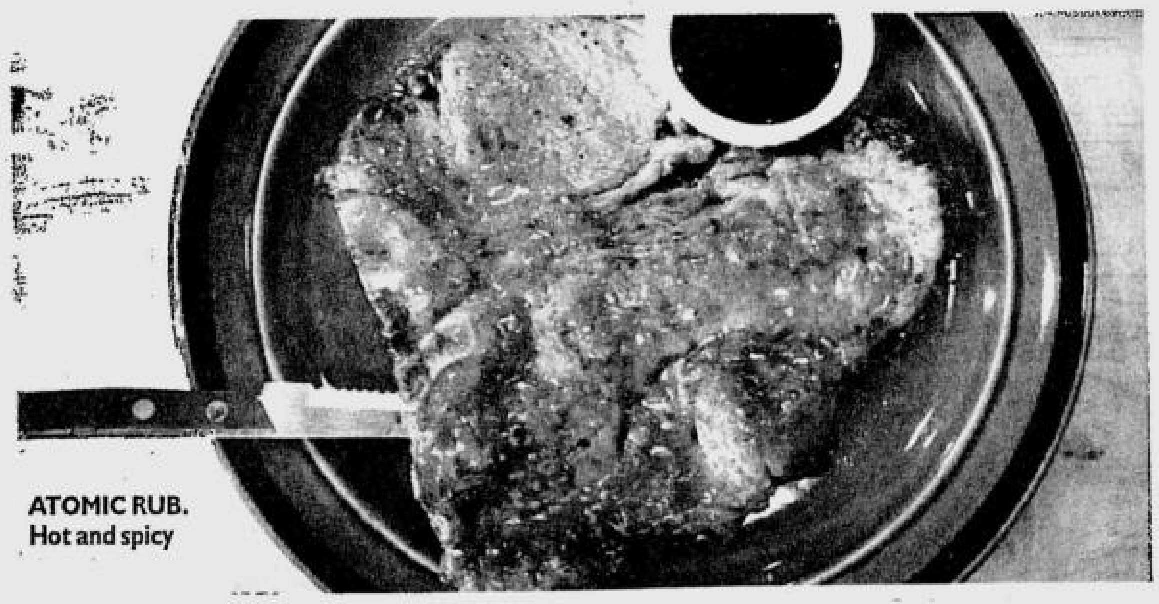
It's time to set your appointment with the steak doctor.

Steak MD is open from Sundays to Thursdays, 11 a.m.-11 p.m., and on Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m.-12 midnight.Visit Steak MD at Creekside Square, Tomas Morato Quezon City or call 4487114.

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph.

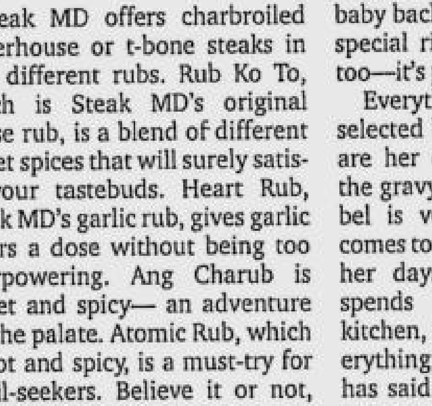
HEART RUB. Steak MD's garlic rub

RUB KO TO. Steak MD's original house rub



ATOMIC RUB.
Hot and spicy

UST Singers to perform in Korea and US



AFTER a successful eight-month world tour last year, the UST Singers will hold its international concert tour titled "Journey On," in Korea and the United States of America starting April 15.

The group's most celebrated performance will be at the Kemper Arena in Kansas City on May 7 at "Springtime of Faith," a Catholic Celebration of Faith of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, sponsored by the same archdiocese. To perform with the UST Singers are American tenor Daniel Rodriguez, Grammy award winner Aaron Neville, Dove Award winner Rachael Lampa and the world-famous tenor trio, The Irish Tenors.

"People who have heard us perform on Fox Channel in Milwaukee and Cleveland last year paved way for this special invitation. This tour is another opportunity to showcase the artistry and unique musical talent of Filipinos on the international stage once more, not only to Filipino and American audiences, but also to the other invited world-renowned artists. We are proud and grateful that the UST Singers are the only Asian performers in this grand event," said Prof. Fidel Gener Calalang, Jr., conductor of the UST Singers.

The UST Singers will start its journey to Korea, where they will be presenting a series of concerts at Daejeon Expo Art Hall, Daegu Cultural Center Hall along with the Pilgrim Mission Choir grand prize winner of the Second International Choir Olympics and Taehan Art Hall on April 16, 17 and 18, respectively. The said concerts are organized and sponsored by Prof. Jae Joon Lee, director of the International Choral Festival of Daegu and conductor of several prominent choirs in Korea including the Pilgrim Mission Choir and Daegu City Ladies Chorus.

The group will also be releasing a double-CD compilation of the best of the UST Singers' Filipino, international and popular tunes from their past recordings called "journey." This album was recorded and produced by JB Music Company based in Germany.

No doubt, the UST Singers will once again bring pride to our country, as they continue to share their gift of music to the world. For more information about the UST Singers, their CD recordings and upcoming events, log on to www.ustsingers.com or www.springtimeoffaith.com.

2BU! PROMO

Win 'American Idol' goodies!

NIKKO Smith will go down in history as the only "American Idol" contestant to be voted out of the semi-finals twice.

We're surprised, actually, because we thought Anthony Federov's cringe-worthy version of "Climb Every Mountain" would get him booted out.

This week we have eight more aspiring idols to watch.

To add even more fun to this season's American idols, 2bU! and Star World have been giving away exclusive "American Idol" premium items.

E-mail your answers to the following questions to americanidol_on_starworld@yahoo.com. The first five people who will send correct answers will win "American Idol" goodies.

Week of April 11

1. This former Idol contestant is currently enjoying a successful country music career. Who is he?
2. Name three (3) contestants whose ritual is to pray prior to their performances.
3. Which contestant considers "Fuzzy Wuzzy" (the bear) her lucky charm?
4. During the April 6 episode, what did female contestants Nadia Turner and Vonzell Solomon sing?
5. Judge Paula Abdul told this former contestant of having a similar voice with Taylor Dayne. Who is she?

Catch "American Idol" on Star World every Wednesday at 4 p.m., 8 p.m., 11:30 p.m.; Thursdays at 11 a.m., 4 p.m., 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.; and Fridays at 2:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Winners for Week of April 4:

1. Darwin Chiong
2. Pika Yonzon
3. Suzette Andres
4. Raia Calingo
5. Kitty Almazan

Summer mall calendar

Great things are happening in malls beyond just shopping

By Angela V. Ignacio and Saleema Devi Refran
2bU! Correspondents

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEPH BRAVO

OKAY, so you've practically walked through every mall in Manila in your sleep and you're getting sick of all that meaningless wandering. Fear not, fellow mallrats, 2bU! has lovingly compiled all the fun, hip happenings in your favorite malls in one big master list, hot off the press. There's always something for everyone, so mall-hop, hop and away!

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Nightly fashion shows at the Eastwood City Walk. Catch Manila's top models strutting their stuff in the latest collections of Chocolate Clothing Co., Ensembles, Details Trading, Porcupine, Bayo and Marithé Francôis Girbaud, among others.

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E-mail aoshi_no_miko@atenista.net (Angela) and s_a_l_e_e_m_a@yahoo.com (Sam)

SAMSUNG'S new baby allows you to go serious with photography...

... OR have fun with frames

New phone that's sleek and handy

Text and photos by Ruth L. Navarra

SAMSUNG SGH-D500

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You can store as many (or as few) as 1,000 one-megapixel photos, 60 minutes of video/speech recording, or up to 20 MP3 songs in its built-in 92 MB shared memory. Though the memory is large by the average standard, it may still disappoint some users spoilt by memory cards.

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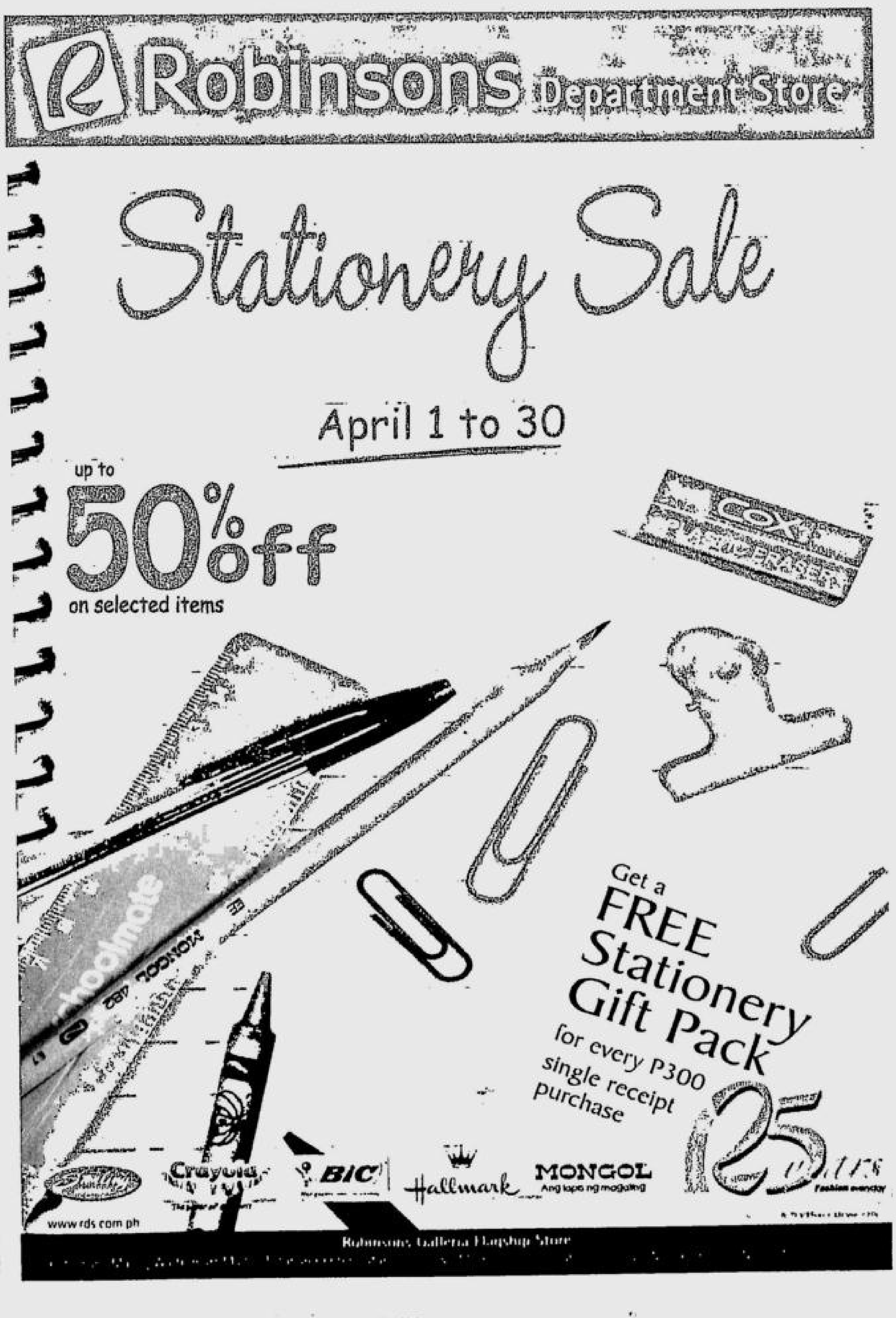

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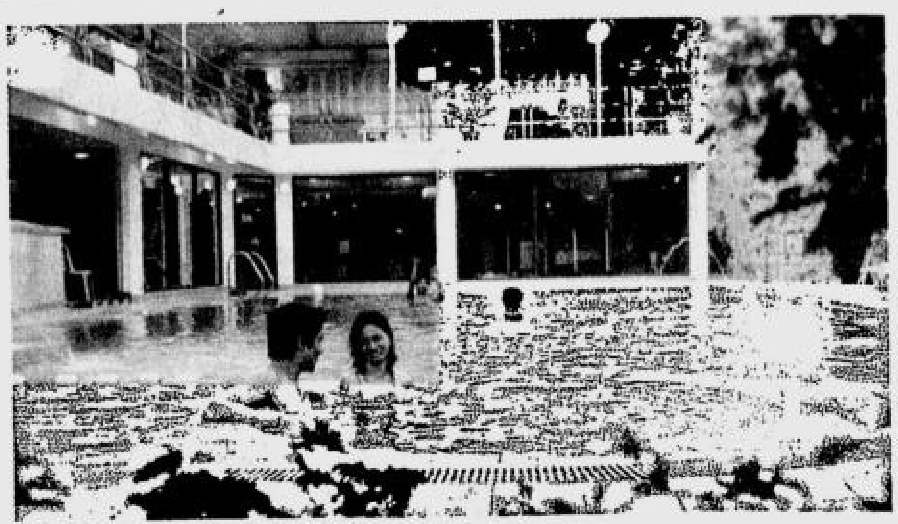
RAINBOW
Choco Rings

YEAH, like you'd actually spend time on the treadmill when you're in paradise



JUMP into the pool to beat the heat

PACIFIC paradise

Pleasure perfect

By Tals Diaz

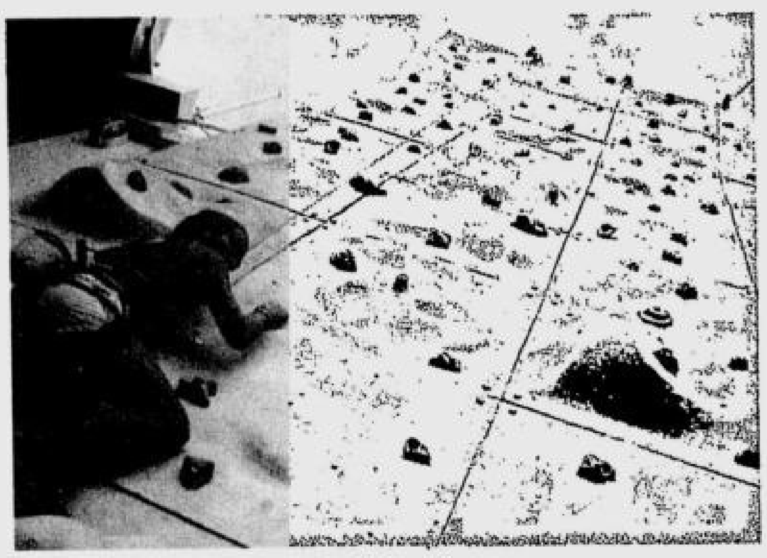
Patio Pacific [formerly Pink Patio] is the place to stay in for both the spoiled and the sporty set

IN MY years of searching the globe for pure shores, sapphire seas, sacred sunsets and perfect coconut trees in an attempt to attain nirvana, I have come to the conclusion that Boracay is still, hands down, the one island that I call home.

Then again, endless drinking sprees at happy hour with friends and pigging out on pork barbecue and *isaw* on sticks isn't exactly the conventional straight path to achieving enlightenment.

So where to go when you want to chill and get your adrenaline thrill?

Wipe off your sandy butts and check out Patio Pacific, or what I fondly term as The Resort Formerly Known as Pink Patio. (Say it with me now, Pacific is the new Pink!)



THE AUTHOR climbs Patio Pacific's wall

PHOTO BY AYE NAVARRO

The newly refurbished resort is the place to stay in for both the spoiled and the sporty set. For the hedonists, Patio Pacific is home to a jacuzzi, a swimming pool and an Alpha Wellness Centre where one can indulge the senses with a Dry Heat Sauna, Aromatherapy, Ionized Air and Shiatsu and Swedish massage services that will guarantee you drifting to la-la land soon after.

But if you're of the active set (or at least you want to shed off those extra pounds from the blasphemous amounts of beer you've been drinking while on vacation), then flex those arms and muscles with Patio Pacific's rock climbing wall and the Alpha Fitness Centre, a fully equipped gym by the pool area.

Yet I think my greatest discovery, which I believe not even diehard Bora veterans have any clue about, is Patio Pacific's Vanilla Lounge, a hippie, trippy chill-out space where you can enjoy your cocktails while whiffing away with your shisha—an ornate mid-eastern waterpipe.

The friendly service offers a choice of different flavored tobacco (I highly recommend the strawberry!) to savour the tasty air with your White Russian (the

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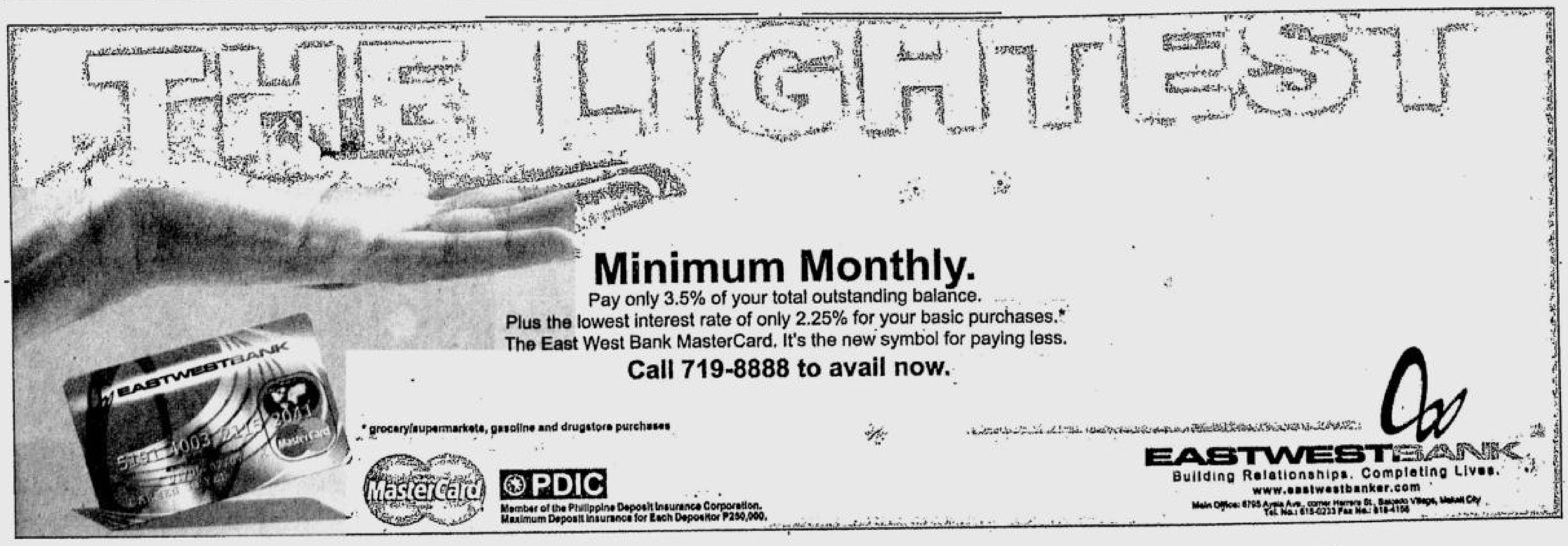

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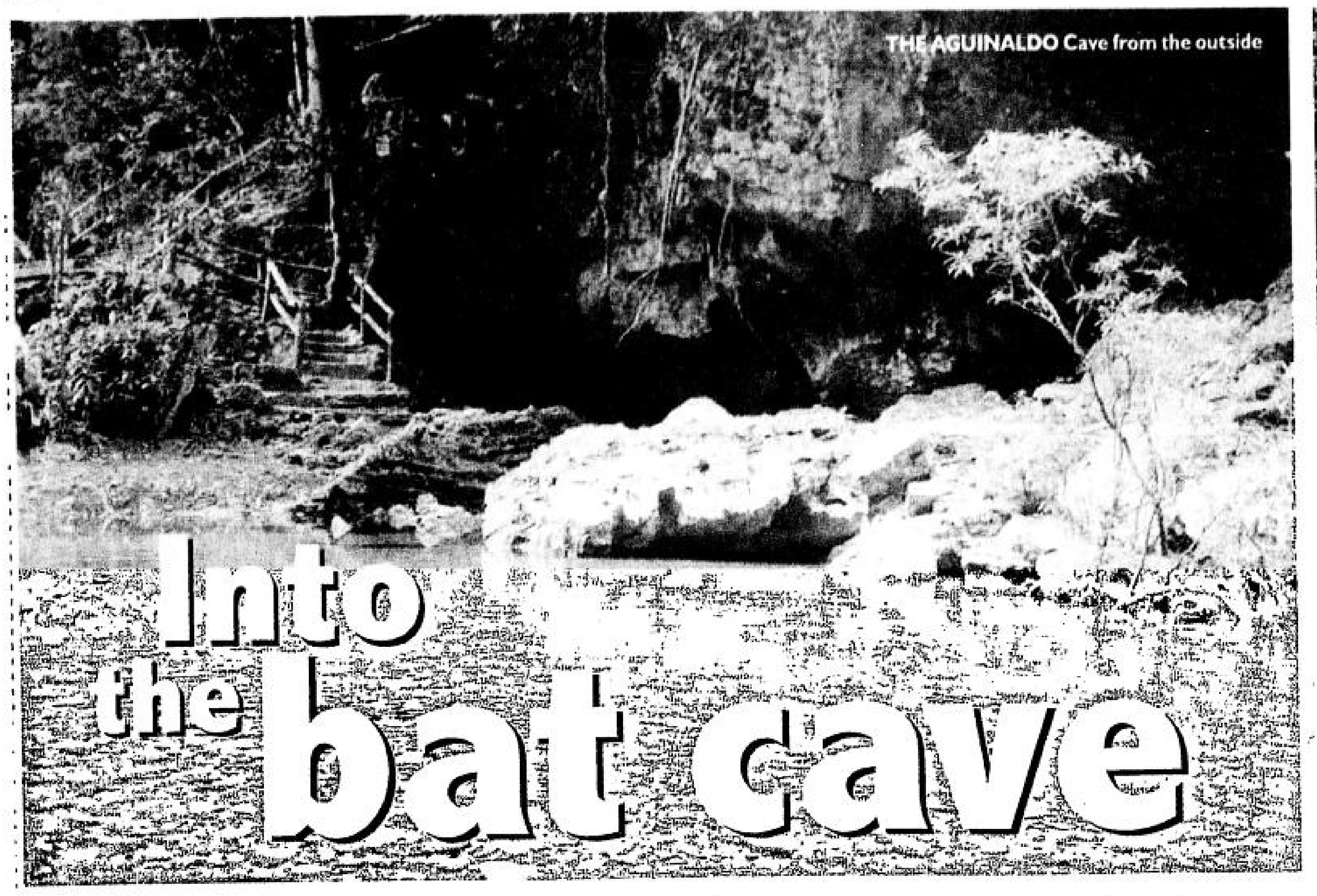

THE AGUINALDO Cave from the outside

Into the bat cave

THE HANGING bridge above Bulaong River

The Paniki Cave inside the Biak na Bato National Park is a geological wonder worth exploring and preserving

Text and photos
by Saleema Devi Refran
2bU! Correspondent

FELLOW 2bU! correspondent Mel and I recently ventured into the Bat Cave. Well, something like it, at least. And while we didn't meet Batman, we did come close to meeting a thousand of his relatives.

The Paniki Cave inside the Biak na Bato National Park is probably the most popular and most explored cave in the entire park. This cave houses a thousand or so bats of different varieties.

Both a geological and historical gem, Biak na Bato is nestled in the Sierra Madre Mountain Range. The park has over 100 caves, but only 17 have been explored. Some of them are considered historical, as Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo and his Katipuneros sought refuge in these caves in their fight against the Spaniards.

Entrance to the park is P20, but if you bring along your school ID you can get in for P10. A guide will be very useful as you negotiate your way around the park and the caves. A guide usually charges P150 for three caves.

At the entrance of the park, a historical marker explains how important Biak na Bato is to our history.

Refreshing sight

The view of the Bulaong River and the hanging bridge would simply take your breath away. This is truly a refreshing sight for stressed-out, workaholic people. The sound of the water moving along the river would make anyone want to close his eyes and meditate.

Our guide, Mang Wilson, said that since time immemorial, the life of the townsfolk has revolved around the Bulaong River. In bygone times, they did their laundry by the river. Now the entire town thrives on the tourism the park generates.

The trek to Paniki Cave was generally okay, but it got steeper and steeper the nearer we were to the cave. The cool breeze and the shelter of the big trees made the trek easier. The feeling of calmness overtook us as we made our way through the trail.

We stopped in front of a big Dao tree that was said to be more than a hundred years old. The tree was even used as a watch tower by the Katipuneros!

A few meters away was the entrance to the Paniki Cave. Mel and I looked at each other when we saw the entrance. We were to descend into a mishmash of broken bamboo and some other planks of wood—what used to be a mini makeshift bridge that got destroyed during the typhoons in December.

We had to do careful balancing and strategic footwork on our way down. Sharp stones were waiting for us down below. But we made it safely down, thanks to the help of our guide.

Clean smell

Paniki Cave is home to a blizzard of bats, so I was expecting to smell bat urine at the entrance. Surprisingly, the cave smelled of clean running water.

I saw only a couple of bats, but Mang Wilson told us there were a thousand or so inside. The bats usually went out of the cave at dusk, around 5 p.m.

Entering Paniki Cave was like entering an enchanted realm. The entire cave was breathtaking. The water splashing against the rocks provided a sense of calm. The water was so clear that one could see the different colors of rocks in the water bed. Putting our feet in the water was like having a foot massage.

Rock formations and mineral deposits lined the entire cave. Mang Wilson said most formations would have grown larger had innumerable tourists not touched them.

On our way back, we decided to go into the Aguinaldo cave. This was the cave primarily used by the late revolutionary and his men when they were hiding from the Spaniards.

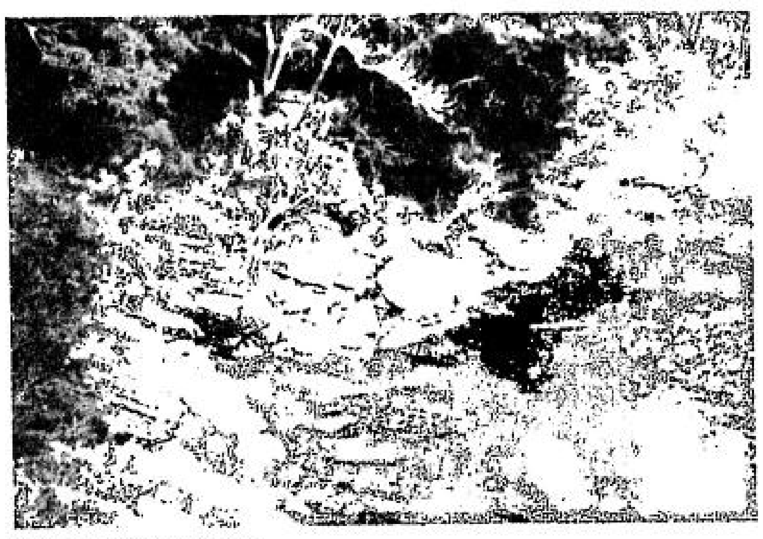
Astoundingly, the cave turned out to be so small that two groups of people wouldn't fit inside. So while waiting for our turn, Mel and I dipped our feet again in the water.

Visitors could go for a swim in the Bulaong River, and there were quite a few picnickers that day. Mel and I just looked at them in envy, since we forgot to pack our swimsuits.

It was almost lunchtime, and the other group was still enjoying their stay inside the cave. Mang Wilson told us it was okay not to go inside the cave since it was filled with water anyway, and there wasn't really much to see.

Sadly, we left the Biak na Bato National Park without seeing the Aguinaldo Cave. But we enjoyed spending an afternoon of history and culture with one of San Miguel's most beloved characters, Tata Paquito Buencamino.

2BU! correspondents Sam and Mel dipping their feet at the Bulaong River


THE BULAONG River

Somewhere in time in Biak na Bato

By Melissa Telan
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Saleema Refran

BIAK na Bato is situated 20 minutes from San Miguel, Bulacan. The park is actually part of two other Bulacan towns, San Ildefonso and Doña Remedios. It was the site of what would turn out to be "cave trekking."

Biak na Bato is a historic place. It served as shelter for hundreds of Katipuneros fleeing from the Spaniards during the Philippine revolution. Tourists and nature lovers also flock to it for its rich flora and fauna and its jaw-dropping rock formations.

The Biak na Bato National Park is especially known for its caves. There are over a hundred caves in the park; however, only less than 20 have been explored. It is a must to hire a local guide when exploring the caves for the first time. A guide usually charges P150 for each cave exploration.

Our group set our sights on Paniki Cave, or Bat Cave. Our guides said that Paniki Cave is the most explored of all the caves because the trek leading to it is comparatively easier.

The hike was far smoother than I had expected. The trail leading to the cave did not seem steep at all. The relatively cooler climate in the park also helped make the climb leisurely.

It did not seem long before we found ourselves in Paniki Cave. We dipped our feet in the cool mountain water found in the cave while our eyes drank in the gargantuan stalagmite formations.

We let ourselves be hypnotized by the cave's wonders. We made our way back to the resort, but not before leaving our weariness behind. I sighed, and realized it was the first time I had enjoyed a trek.

Leisure farm

We returned to the San Miguel Leisure Farm for lunch. Our food tasted excellent. The fantastic view of the Sierra Madre Mountain Range also helped whet our appetites.

But the best part of my stay was taking my siesta in one of the resort's thatched-roof huts. The huts were small but cozy, and it was considerably cool despite the lack of electricity. Sleep came easy. In fact, it was one of the best naps I ever had.

After siesta, our hosts, Christine and Yummie Ngkaion, announced they were taking us somewhere—not just to another place but to another time.

When our van headed toward the San Miguel town proper and made a turn to Rizal St., we saw century-old houses and we felt, indeed, that we had gone back in time.

But what made the houses special were the role some of them had played in Philippine history. Mr. and Ms F. D. V. Buencamino gave us a tour of the houses while providing facts and trivia.

The De Leon house was said to be owned by a relative of Gregorio del Pilar. Apparently, explained the Buencamino couple, Gregorio del Pilar stayed in the house before proceeding to Tirad Pass.

The De Leon house carried furniture and artifacts from the past century, all peculiar and interesting. But most fascinating were the religious icons, particularly the century-old sculptures of the 12 apostles. They were stored in a dark storage room only to be taken out during the Holy Week for procession. Kept in the dark room, the icons looked almost alive.

The townsfolk believed that the images were magical. The caretaker of the mansion told us the statues were picky on who would carry them during processions. "If they don't like you, you won't be able to lift them. They will suddenly become heavy," he said.

At the Tecson-Mendiola mansion, which belongs to a clan of Chinese-Spanish mestizos, we were told that Emilio Aguinaldo signed the Truce of Biak na Bato there.

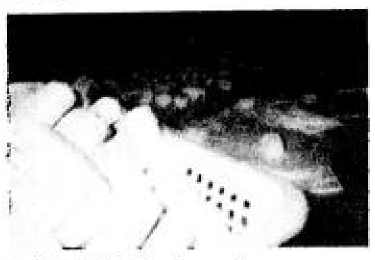
Some houses on Rizal St. would be familiar to many since they had been used for movie and television productions, such as the movie, "Filipinas," and the soap drama, "Hanggang sa Dulo ng Walang Hanggan."

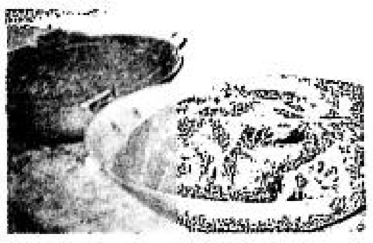
We capped our stay in San Miguel with a visit to Ocampo's *pastillas* factory, where we learned about the basics of making the yummy delicacy while gorging on it. (See related story)

It was sad that the day had to end. If only I had known sooner, I would have gone to San Miguel earlier.

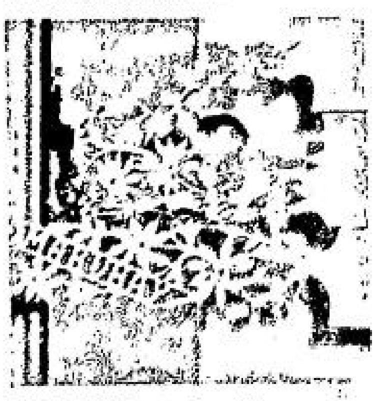
E-mail the author at melissatelan@yahoo.com

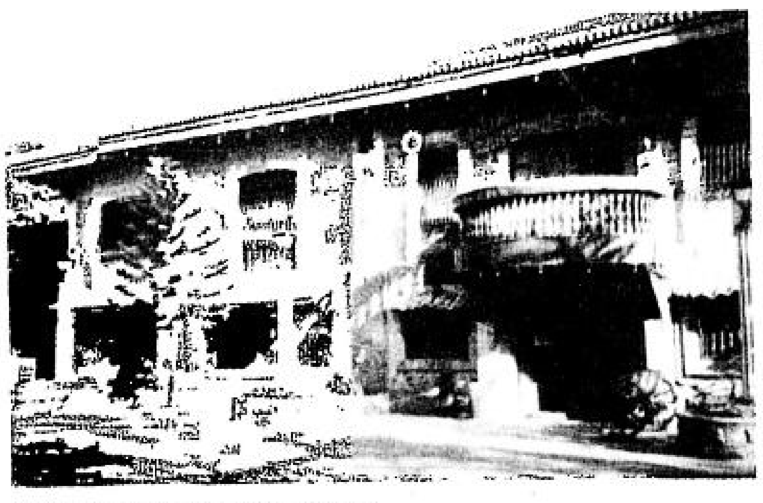
A BIG vat of yummy pastillas de leche


PASTILLAS before they get wrapped


OOH! U-be!

ONE of many ancestral houses in San Miguel, Bulacan


THE LOST art of pastillas wrapper making. We rarely see these wrappers today.


SAN MIGUEL'S Spanish town hall

ROOMS for relaxation

Pleasure perfect

From page F1

drink, I mean, unless you were lucky enough to have hooked up with a real white Russian dude).

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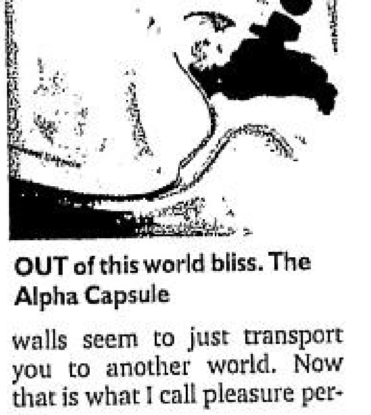
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CAT Juan enjoys her sisha
PHOTO BY NATALIA DIAZ

THE VANILLA Lounge
PHOTO BY NATALIA DIAZ

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

WHAT IT'S LIKE

One ovary less

By Saleema Devi Refran
2bU! Correspondent

The operation made me a better person. It drove me into dreaming big and believing that nothing was impossible

IT WAS January 1999. I was in my third year in high school. Classes just resumed, and I just found out I got a high grade in my Geometry exam—totally unbelievable.

Math had always been my waterloo. I was elated. Later that night, I felt this excruciating pain in my lower right abdomen. I knew something was up.

Everybody said it was probably appendicitis, but the blood test showed little to prove it. My doctor decided it would be best if we just took out the appendix before it ruptured.

I was in a daze taking all of these in. Don't get me wrong, I loved getting confined and all. It gave me a reason to miss class and be pampered by everyone. But this was going to be different. I was going to get an operation. Something was about to be taken out of my body. This couldn't be good.

I have little memory of what happened during the operation, except this one moment when I woke up sedated and felt nothing, not a single body part. I remembered calling out for my mom and asking for a glass of water. It was so scary.

The next time I woke up, I heard my parents talking about an operation that involved taking out an ovary. They said the ovary was the size of a fist and had a cyst inside, so both ovary and cyst had to go.

But I was still woozy from the sedative, and besides, I had an appendectomy, so listening to this was the least of my worries.

Telenovela

I never thought I'd be saying this, but it felt like I was watching a movie (make that a telenovela). It didn't hit me hard. It was more like a slow realization. Everything felt so unreal. I simply couldn't fathom the idea that one of my ovaries had been taken out.

I mean, it couldn't happen to me. I was just 14. Fourteen! And I was celebrating my 15th birthday the week after. It couldn't be true. It couldn't be me.

I later found out what really happened. My right ovary was swollen and had a huge cyst inside it. The ovary had twisted itself around my appendix. That was what caused the pain in my lower right abdomen, not an impending appendix rupture.

Thankfully, the cyst inside my right ovary was benign. Losing the ovary was already a bit hard to understand. I wouldn't know what I'd have done had I found out the cyst was cancerous.

Somehow my young mind made understanding what happened easier. It was so funny how I dealt with it. I went on telling myself "What do I need an ovary for?". Obviously, getting married and having children were nowhere near my priorities that time.

I went on with my life thinking what happened didn't matter. Being one ovary less didn't make me a lesser person, right?

Fast forward to September the same year. I was feeling sick the entire morning. I was out of class attending a meeting for a school production. I was feeling nauseated when I decided to finally go to the school clinic.

I threw up and threw up until all that was coming out was stomach acid. The nurse called my parents. Luckily my dad was in his office. He decided to take me to the hospital. The finding: I had another cyst in my left ovary.

The ultrasound the next day confirmed the diagnosis. There was no escaping it this time. It wasn't a slow realization like before. This one hit me hard. I couldn't afford to lose my one and only ovary now.

Thankfully, my doctor said the cyst was still a bit small and operable. She wouldn't operate unless it was cancerous, and I could fight it by drinking some medicine.

That idea, although comforting, didn't give me peace of mind. I was scared for my future. What would happen if I lost my one remaining ovary? I won't ever have children.

But my classmates were there to help me accept it. They made things easier. I remember one of them telling me she would give me one of her ovaries. I knew it was impossible, but she was really sincere in saying it. Years later, I found out she, too, was having trouble with her reproductive system.

Divine intervention

Call me crazy but after a month of taking my medicine, I stopped. I haven't been to the doctor since. I know it's absurd, but I want to leave it all to my faith. I don't want to be burdened by thinking about my cyst every day. I don't want to stop life and think about my one remaining ovary. It shouldn't stop me from going for my dreams and becoming the person I want to be.

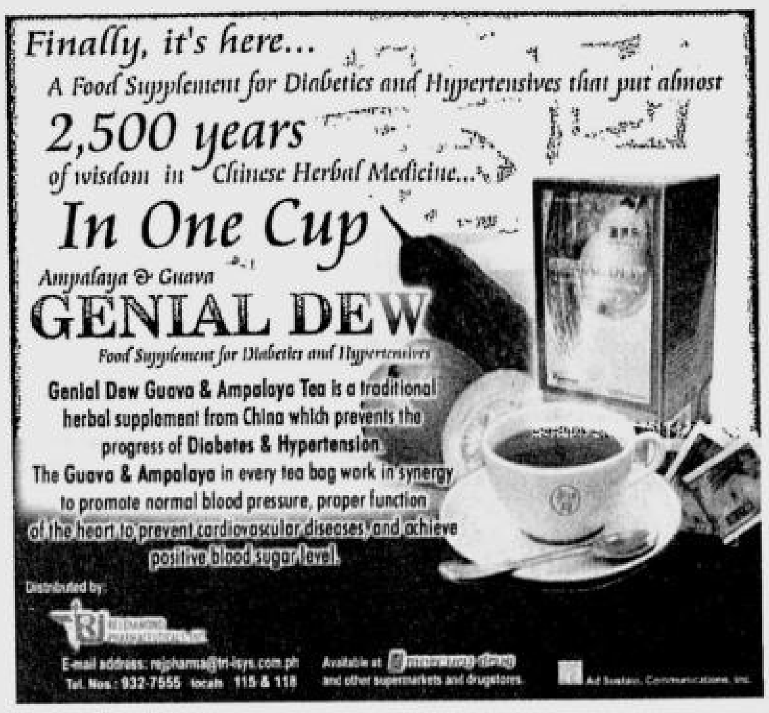
Having had my ovary taken out was, I believe, a divine intervention. After that operation, I got a clearer view of what I wanted in my life. All along I was this happy-go-lucky girl who viewed life as a joke. I couldn't care less about taking down notes in class or taking care of my younger sisters. I was a floater. I went in where everybody was. I was a drifter, and didn't care where the tides took me.

The operation made me a better person. It drove me into dreaming big and believing that nothing was impossible. I dared to go for my dreams.

Like, who would've thought I'd actually be writing for 2bU!? I was just reading it then, wondering how it would be like to write for it. Or, who would've thought I'd get into UP? I had always felt I was too *bobo* for that school.

Now, everything is within reach. Impossible is but a state of mind. I've realized that every day we are tested. That while there are opportunities, there are also challenges. One loss doesn't make you any less of a person. It's only you who can make yourself better.

E-mail the author at s_a_l_e_e_m_a@yahoo.com



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TWO CUPS OF GENIAL DEW A DAY WILL KEEP THE DOCTOR AWAY!

Studies show that drinking tea can make one healthier. The unique properties of green tea which help the body increase metabolism, detoxify, improve resistance from diseases and boost energy level can ensure anyone in tiptop shape.

Nowadays, a habit of drinking tea should be developed as diseases are more often borne out of unhealthy lifestyle practices. Diabetes and hypertension, the most common diseases of Filipinos today are proven to be more lifestyle-related than hereditary. Ergo, most of those who have diabetes or hypertension or both will never know if he/she has the illness unless a grave attack of the symptom would occur that would prompt a visit to a specialist. Ideally, that should not be the case. One should always remember that disease prevention is always better than looking for a disease's cure.

Diabetes and hypertension have costly maintenance medicines. But with Genial Dew, an ingenious product from the makers of Kankunis, an established slimming tea for women, comes Genial Dew Guava & Amplaya Tea. This is a concoction that combines the medicinal powers of guava and ampalaya in a tea bag to prevent and combat diabetes and hypertension. Truly a food supplement that came from natural ingredients, one need not worry about prescriptions and harmful side effects.

Guava which contains vitamin C that is twice as found in citrus fruits has healthful benefits for the body. It contains Amino acids which help prevent arteriosclerosis or plaques that block the blood vessels. Guava leaves contain potassium which helps maintain normal blood pressure and aids the heart to function properly. It is also found with prophylactic property that prevents complications which lead to diabetes. The ampalaya fruit which is being pushed in the market as an alternative diabetes medication is proven to lower one's cholesterol and blood sugar level. It is good for diabetics because it prevents the aggravation of the disease. Ampalaya also contains iron that makes the digestive system function well and helps increase one's appetite.

Aside from guava and ampalaya, Genial Dew also contains Kung ting tea, to tea and Millet Beard. The green tea components of Kung ting tea and To tea are responsible for reducing the cholesterol level in the body. Kung ting tea contains catechins and multivitamins that act as anti-oxidants and cancer-fighting agents. To tea has a relaxing property that calms one's senses. While Millet Beard or corn medicinal silk contains the much needed vitamins C and K. These vitamins function as stimulants and diuretics which prevent hypertension and promotes a healthy liver condition.

Genial Dew is advised for people in their 30s and up to prevent the development and/or occurrence of hypertension and diabetes. It is also a good supplement for those undergoing diabetes medication. Unlike diabetes and hypertension maintenance medication, Genial Dew is easy on the budget. Available in a box of 30's it is priced at P240. Trial packs of 5's is also available at 42. 50 or P8 50 per sachet.

Cut on soda and coffee for a healthier you. As a maintenance beverage, just steep one sachet in a hot water for 10-15 minutes.

Genial Dew is available at all Watson's Personal Care Stores nationwide. It is exclusively distributed by **REJ Diamond Laboratories,** Diliman QC
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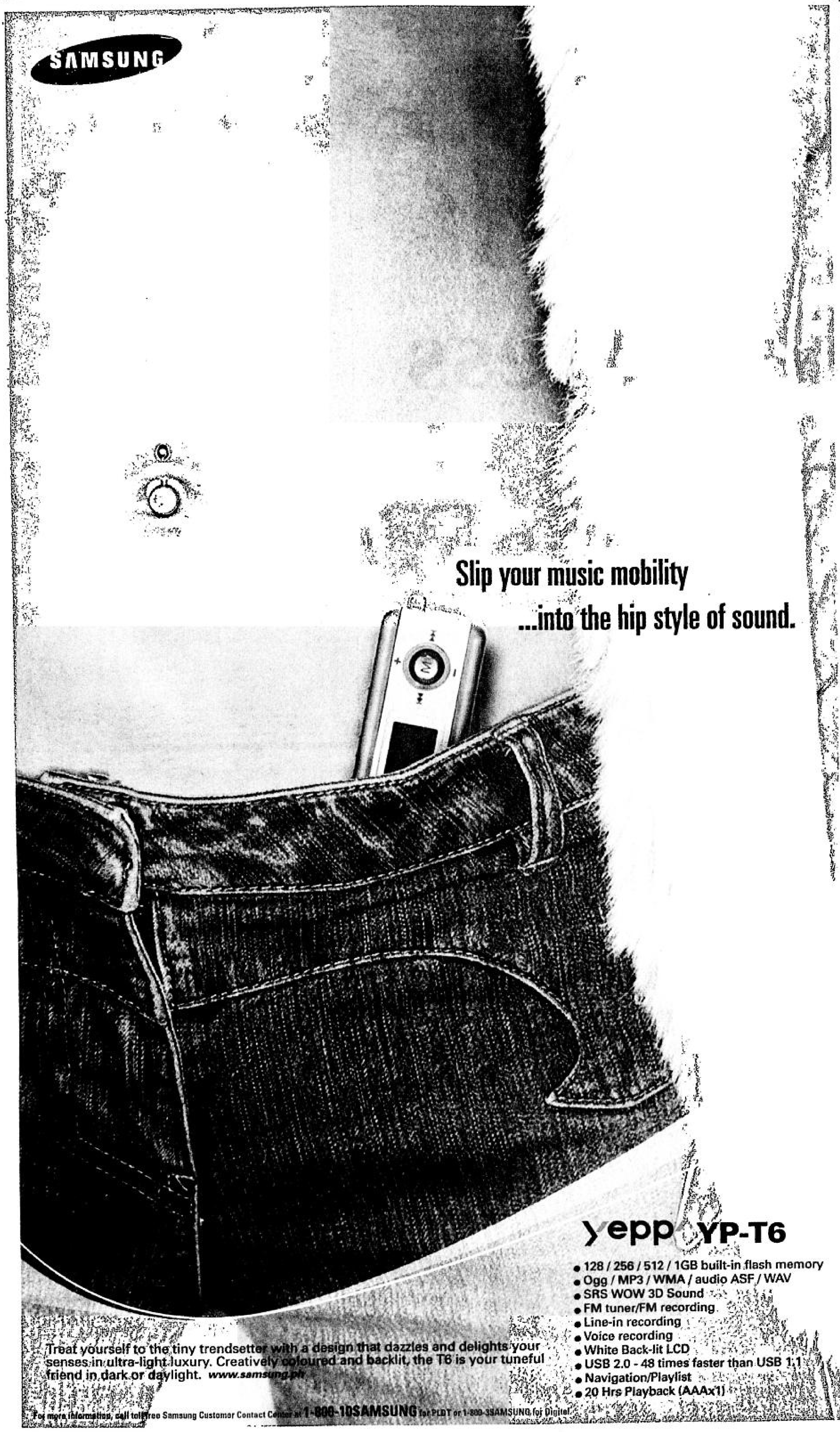

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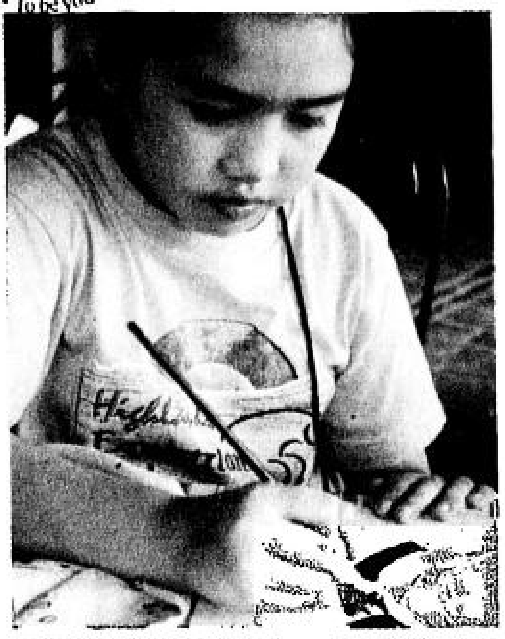

THE WORKSHOP is designed for children ages 5-15.

Summer camp for kids

GIVE your kids the chance to experience summer camp. Sacred Heart School's Summer Camp offers a program that is based on the standards of no less than the American Camping Association.

The facilitators of the camp are members of the International Camping Fellowship, ensuring that kids are not shortchanged when it comes to giving them fun and memorable summer experiences.

Young campers will surely enjoy Camp Cheerio, a special day camp program for children ages 4-6. It offers all kinds of creative activities to help kids explore the diversity and excitement of the outdoors.

This three-week program is perfect for children who are still too young for an overnight stay or two away from home. The program culminates with the campers getting to experience cookouts, field games, adventure races and other exciting stuff.

The Summer Adventure first level overnight camp lets children ages 7-12 relish paradise outdoors when they visit a beautiful lakefront setting in Pililia, Rizal. Here, kids can delight in a true camping experience as they get to live in tents.

They will also have fun taking part in adventure races, water fun activities, ropes courses and more. At night, kids can bond by the campfire exchanging stories, singing together and creating entertaining skits.

The camping experience goes up a notch higher with Summer Challenge, where campers get to enjoy summer camp for three days by learning survival skills in the jungle.

But if you'd like to supplement your child's learning experience at home, Sacred Heart School has The Mentors Program, a comprehensive Math and English program that nurtures the minds of children. Competent teachers conduct programs that are carefully tailored to suit students of different grade levels and abilities.

Call or visit Sacred Heart School in Binondo (2470862), De la Rosa Street, Makati (8108997), Glorietta (8671125), Greenhills (7051630), Malabon (4473371), Parañaque (8231348), San Lorenzo, Makati (8153058) and The Fort (8162321).

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Send your entries to the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Address them to Hazel Soriaga. For inquiries, call Ching dela Cruz at 897-8808 loc 259 or 239 or e-mail cmdelacruz for any inquiry. Deadline of submission of entries is on April 18, Monday, 5 p.m.

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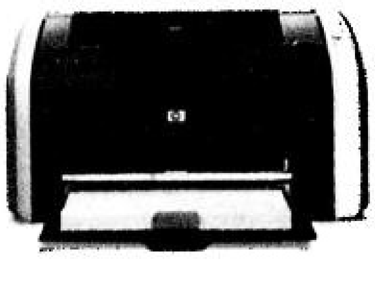

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Join the 2005 Palanca Awards!

By Maui V. Reyes
2bU! Correspondent

CALLING all writers (aspiring or otherwise), bloggers and everyone else who has picked up a pen in their life. If you're 18 years old and below with dreams of grandeur, this just might be your chance to gloat away. The highly acclaimed Carlos Palanca Awards for Literature is looking for entries for their Kabataan Essay category.

The Kabataan Essay is an informal piece, so the more personal, the better. This year's theme is "The Greatest Value my Father/Mother Taught Me" for the English division, and "Ang Pinakamahalagang Aral na itinuro ng Aking Ama/Ina" for the Filipino division. Your piece, which should carry an original title, must be at least four typewritten pages long, and not more than five pages.

All entries should be in by April 30. Log on to www.viloria.com/cpma-2005-rules.doc, for the complete list of rules and mechanics (there are a lot, so better pay close attention).

Check out last year's winners in the English and Filipino division on this page.

Plea to my peers

By Florianne Jimenez
First Prize Kabataan Essay
54th Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature

ONCE, while channel surfing, I caught this ad on MTV: "What would you do if you were President? a) Declare unlimited texting for all students, b) Mandate free entrance to all clubs and movie theaters, or c) Provide free education for all Filipinos?"

The answer, obviously, is C. In fact, that's what everyone said when I asked them the question. "Free education." "High quality education." "Free, high quality education for everyone."

I know, I know. Education is the hope of this country. Education is the key to our progress. Education is the light of the future. Blah blah.

Hackneyed and corny as these lines sound, they're true. Education really would give this country a better chance at progress. If we were all educated, everyone would get better jobs, which in turn would make more money, which would attract more investors, and then we would have even more money.

Statistics on poverty would greatly improve, crime rates would drop and hopefully, we will start electing educated and intelligent leaders, and we will all live happily ever after.

Everyone says the future is bright for an educated populace, but I can't help thinking this might also lead to our country's decline. How so?

Paradox

Imagine this scenario: a man (let's call him Juan) and his family have locked themselves in a room since the beginning of time. There's no opening to the outside world except for a small, square window.

When Juan looks out of the tiny window, he sees a tree. "Well, what's to see out there? Just a tree. I'm better off in here."

But in time, the window gets bigger and bigger, revealing more of the outside world: a horse, more trees, a house and eventually a whole city.

Juan thinks about the things he's seen and decides, "There's definitely something better out there!" So he sneaks out and joins the townsfolk outside. He gets a job as an artisan

PLEA/ G3

'Isang prinsesa sa Malacañang'

By Marylaine Louise L. Viernes
First Prize Kabataan Sanaysay
54th Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature

NAAALALA ko noon, noong bata pa ako, laging sinasabi ng lola ko sa akin na isang prinsesa raw ako. At narito na nga ako sa Palasyo ng Malacañang. Yun nga lang, hindi ako prinsesa, kundi Pangulo ng Pilipinas! Pero parang ganun na rin iyon! 'Hindi pang-gulo, pangulo! Hawak ko ang kapangyarihan, nasa mga palad ko ang kahihinatnan ng bansang nagluklok sa akin sa mataas na puwestong ito, na wala nang mas tataas pa. Hindi pa nga rin ako makapaniwala! Sa ngayon, nagpapasarap pa lang ako dito.

Paano kaya kung tuluyan na lang akong magpasarap dito? Abusuhin ko na lang kaya itong binigay sa akin na kapangyarihan, gaya ng mga nauna sa akin? Aba, daig ko pa ang Starstruck Survivors nito, buong bansa'y kilala ako, at 'di lang isang milyong piso ang maiuuwi ko! Ang yabang ko magsalita, ano? Siyempre, presidente na yata 'to! Akala siguro ng mga taga-boto ko na bumoboto lang sila ng People's Choice Award sa isa na namang paligsahan sa telebisyon kaya nandito ako ngayon. Ma-appeal kasi ako eh! Biruin ninyo, 17 gulang pa lamang ako naging Presidente na? Nagulat nga ako bakit walang nag-protesta eh! Himala ano? Unang araw ko pa lang, nag-akyat na ako agad ng bagong karangalan sa Pilipinas-Guinness Book of World Records holder na ang Pilipinas para sa pinakabatang naging pangulo ng isang bansa! Galing, 'no, dalawang world record agad sa loob lamang ng isang taon. Una, yung kissing record sa "Lovapalooza" noong Pebrero, tapos ay ito! Pero, bilib talaga ako sa mga Pinoy na bumoto sa akin. At nagpapasalamat din ako sa mga humirang sa 'king Pangulo ng Lupang Hinirang! Siguro naisip na nila na dapat ay kumuha naman sila ng medyo bata-bata para hindi pa gaanong maitim ang budhi! At siyempre takot pang magnakaw, at nakikinig pa sa mga magulang.

Ayan talaga ako, lantaran magsalita. Hindi ako masakit magsalita—makatotohanan lang. Pero ngayon, seryosohan na. Narito ako ngayon sa posisyong ito dahil sa maraming dahilan. Iisa-isahin ko iyon. Ang isa doon ay dahil isa akong taong alam ang gusto at gagawin ang lahat upang makamit ito. Kumbaga, mas gumagawa ako kaysa nagsasalita. Eh sobrang

'ISANG'/ G3

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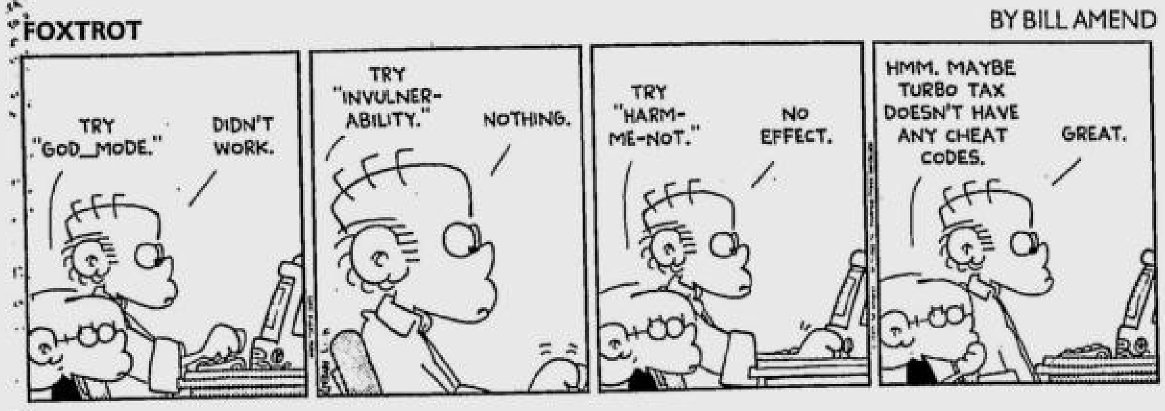
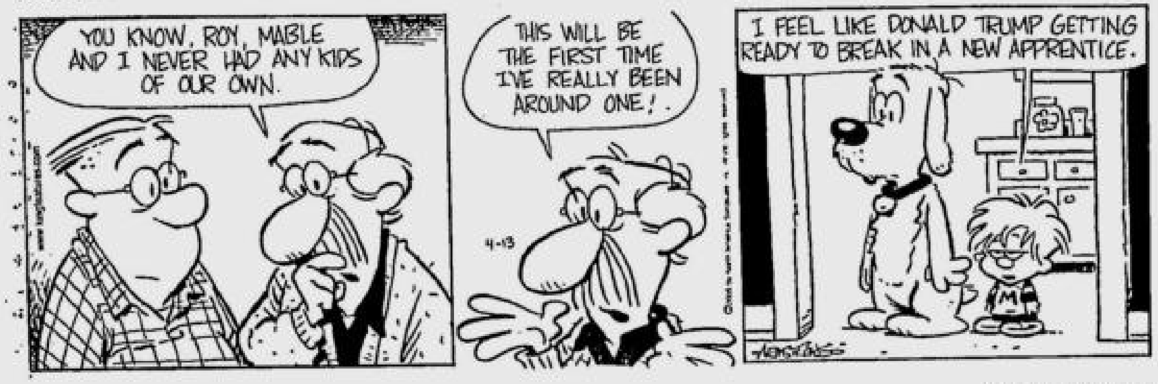
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


TRY "GOD_MODE."
DIDN'T WORK.
TRY "INVULNERABILITY."
NOTHING.
TRY "HARM-ME-NOT."
NO EFFECT.
HMM. MAYBE TURBO TAX DOESN'T HAVE ANY CHEAT CODES.
GREAT.

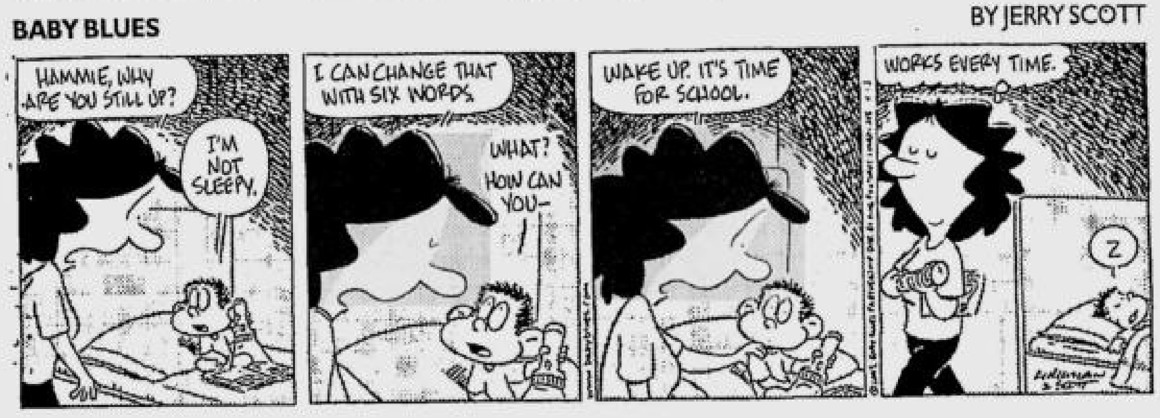
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


YOU KNOW, ROY, MABLE AND I NEVER HAD ANY KIDS OF OUR OWN.
THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TIME I'VE REALLY BEEN AROUND ONE!
4-13
I FEEL LIKE DONALD TRUMP GETTING READY TO BREAK IN A NEW APPRENTICE.

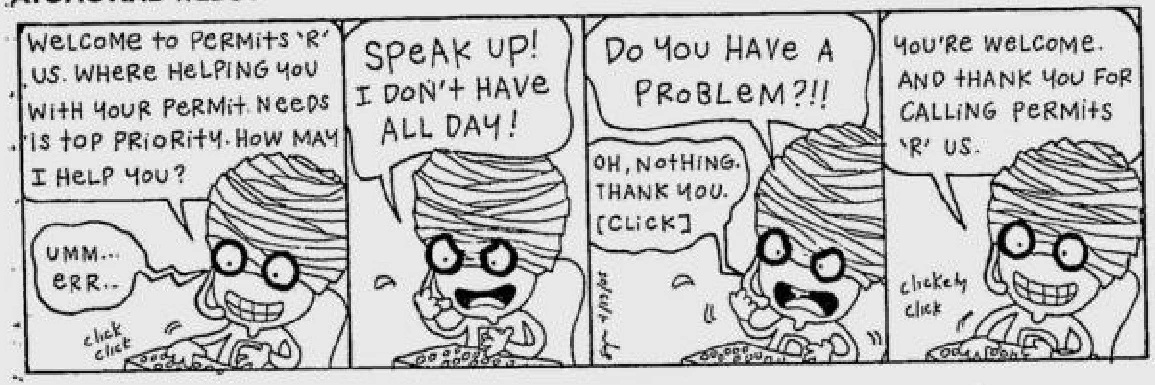
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HAMMIE, WHY ARE YOU STILL UP?
I'M NOT SLEEPY.
I CAN CHANGE THAT WITH SIX WORDS.
WHAT? HOW CAN YOU—
WAKE UP. IT'S TIME FOR SCHOOL.
WORKS EVERY TIME.
Z

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Welcome to Permits 'R' Us. Where helping you with your permit needs is top priority. How may I help you?
UMM... ERR..
click click
Speak up! I don't have all day!
Do you have a problem?!!
Oh, nothing. Thank you. [Click]
You're welcome. And thank you for calling Permits 'R' Us.
clickety click

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're an original thinker. You love to pioneer new ideas. Furthermore, you're outspoken, strong-willed and bold. You're capable of working on your own even if you don't get recognized for your efforts. You can be extremely private. You are highly individualistic. The year ahead is social, more fun-loving and favorable for relationships.

Birthdate of: Thomas Jefferson, US president; Don Adams, actor; Rick Schroeder. actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Don't let a group of friends sweep you up in a frenzy of enthusiasm about something you don't really believe in. It's easy to get talked into something today.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You don't know what others expect of you today. You can't tell if your boss disapproves of you or loves you! Stay honest in everything you do today.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Stay clear of bogus groups with their own secret agendas. It's easy to be swindled or to be convinced about something that is not true. Be on guard!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Don't give away the farm today. Someone might prey on your good instincts. Your judgment is not clear today. Be careful. (I mean this.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Conversations with partners and others are confusing today. You don't know whether to go or stay, to act or not act. Best to do nothing.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Don't get suckered into anything at work today. It's possible. You're not sure what to endorse or support. There's a real possibility of deception out there today.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You could really kid yourself about romance today. But then, is there an easier subject about which to fool yourself? I don't think so. (Join the club; we number millions.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Don't work too hard trying to do things at home today. Take care of yourself. While it's good to help family members, don't be a sucker for a sob story or crocodile tears.

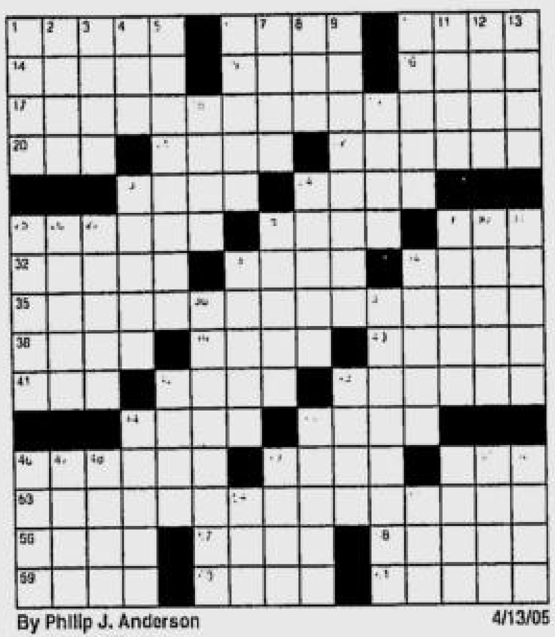
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might feel discouraged today. For some reason your guard is down. It's hard to believe in yourself. Relax. This lack of confidence is a temporary illusion.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Be very careful with all financial transactions today, including shopping or spending money in some way. Your judgment is off. In addition, you're tempted by luxury!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Your energy level is low today. Don't tax yourself. It's OK to do less and relax if you can. (Some days you have it—some days you don't.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You might have some strange feelings today. Don't worry about this. It will be gone soon. You feel quite selfless today and want to devote your energy to helping others.

DAILY CROSSWORD

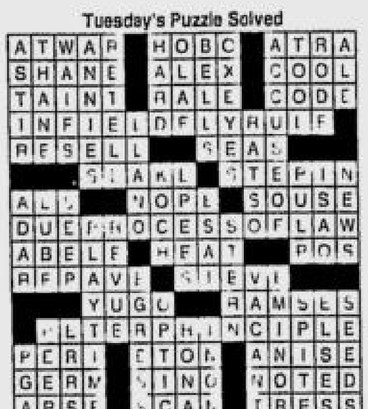

By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

4/13/05

ACROSS
1 Struck, old-style
6 Speaker of Cooperstown
10 Avian abode
14 Intrusive online ad
15 Talk wildly
16 Chorus voice
17 Quantum theorist's fantasy?
20 Slangy refusal
21 Dotted cubes
22 Formal agreement
23 Lady's guy
24 Performer's engagements
25 Collude
28 Window section
29 Serving of corn
32 Neighbor of Cuba
33 Washed-out
34 On the sheltered side
35 M.C. Escher's fantasy?
38 Jogging pace
39 Prohibits
40 Give a ring
41 Amoral deed
42 Medical suffix
43 Pestilent fly
44 Oodles
45 Amazes
46 Of primitive groups
49 Spy Mata
50 Lindstrom or Zadora
53 Genie's fantasy?
56 Christiania, today
57 Dorothy's pup
58 Literary class
59 Clairvoyant
60 Industrial show, casually
61 Gorged

DOWN
1 Whirl around
2 NYC cultural attraction
3 Colorful fish
4 Harbor boat
5 Contagious outbreak
6 Pamphlet
7 Unlikely
8 Climbing vine
9 One standing guard
10 Designates
11 Isle near Corsica
12 Editorial order
13 British Conservative
18 Cloud number
19 Strong inclination
23 Ya dig?
24 Causes rancor
25 Gunfire
26 Call-length pants
27 Attempt a pickup
28 Great care and effort
29 "The Waste Land" poet
30 Ages and ages
31 Zellweger of "Jerry Maguire"
33 Braid of hair
34 Grate collection
36 Unequivocal
37 Positive trends
42 Norwegian king
43 Singer Amos
44 Detest
45 Exuberant cry
46 Pairs
47 Increase
48 Wight or Man
49 URL starter
50 Beer quantity
51 As to
52 Mature
54 Bagel topper
55 New Zealand parrot

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved



A	T	W	A	R	■	H	O	B	O	■	A	T	R	A
S	H	A	N	E	■	A	L	E	X	■	C	O	O	L
T	A	I	N	T	■	R	A	L	E	■	C	O	D	E
I	N	F	I	E	L	D	F	L	Y	R	U	L	E	■
R	E	S	E	L	L	■	■	S	E	A	S	■	■	■
■	■	■	S	T	A	L	K	■	S	T	E	P	I	N
A	L	L	■	■	N	O	P	E	■	S	O	U	S	E
D	U	E	P	R	O	C	E	S	S	O	F	L	A	W
A	B	E	L	E	■	H	E	A	T	■	■	P	O	S
R	E	P	A	V	E	■	S	T	E	V	E	■	■	■
■	■	■	Y	U	G	O	■	■	R	A	M	S	E	S
■	P	E	T	E	R	P	R	I	N	C	I	P	L	E
P	E	R	I	■	E	T	O	N	■	A	N	I	S	E
G	E	R	M	■	S	I	N	G	■	N	O	T	E	D
A	P	S	E	■	S	C	A	N	■	T	R	E	S	S

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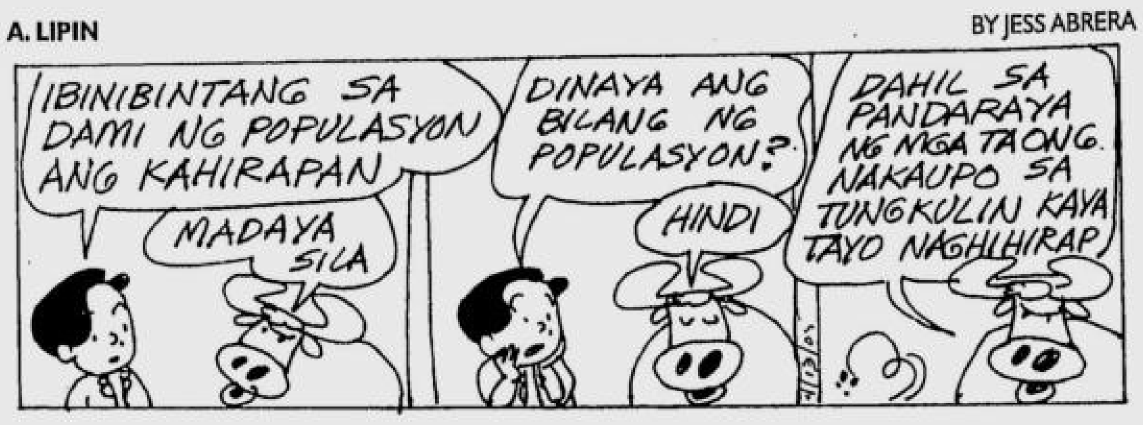
4/13/05

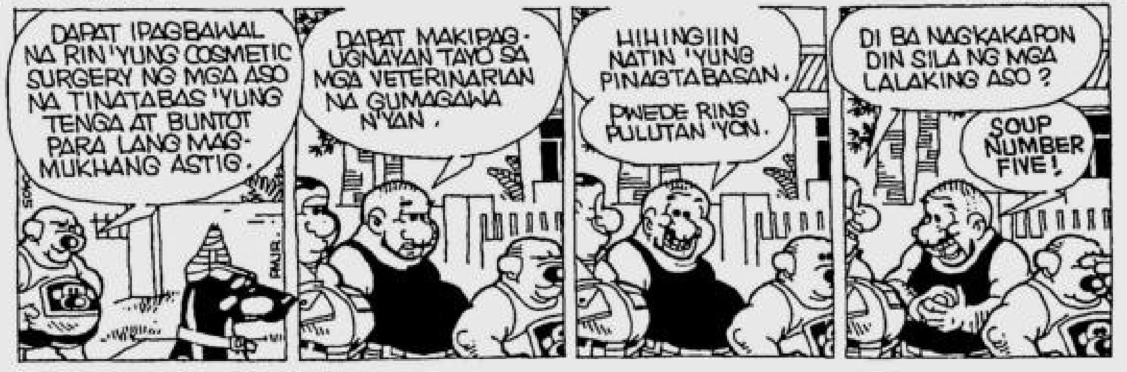
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


IBINIBINTANG SA DAMI NG POPULASYON ANG KAHIRAPAN
MADAYA SILA
DINAYA ANG BILANG NG POPULASYON?
HINDI
DAHIL SA PANDARAYA NG MGA TAONG NAKAUPO SA TUNGKULIN KAYA TAYO NAGHIHIRAP

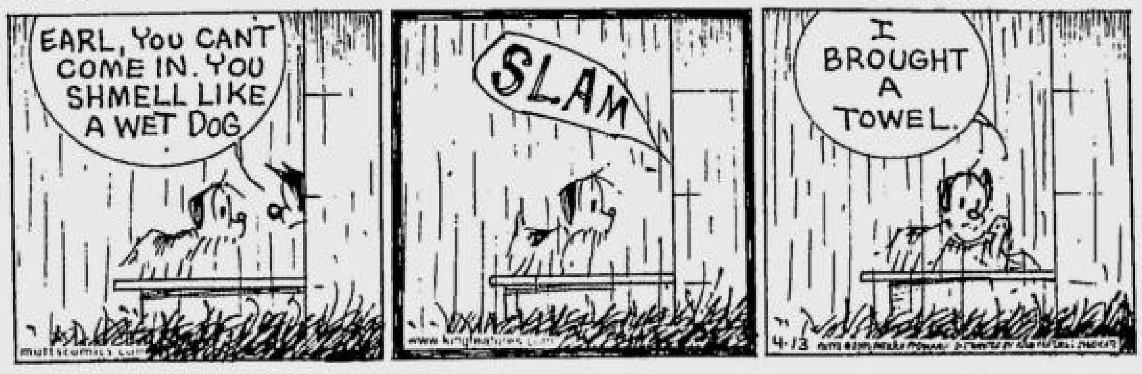
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


DAPAT IPAGBAWAL NA RIN 'YUNG COSMETIC SURGERY NG MGA ASO NA TINATABAS 'YUNG TENGA AT BUNTOT PARA LANG MAGMUKHANG ASTIG.
DAPAT MAKIPAG-UGNAYAN TAYO SA MGA VETERINARIAN NA GUMAGAWA N'YAN.
HIHINGIIN NATIN 'YUNG PINAGTABASAN.
PWEDE RING PULUTAN 'YON.
DI BA NAGKAKAPON DIN SILA NG MGA LALAKING ASO?
SOUP NUMBER FIVE!

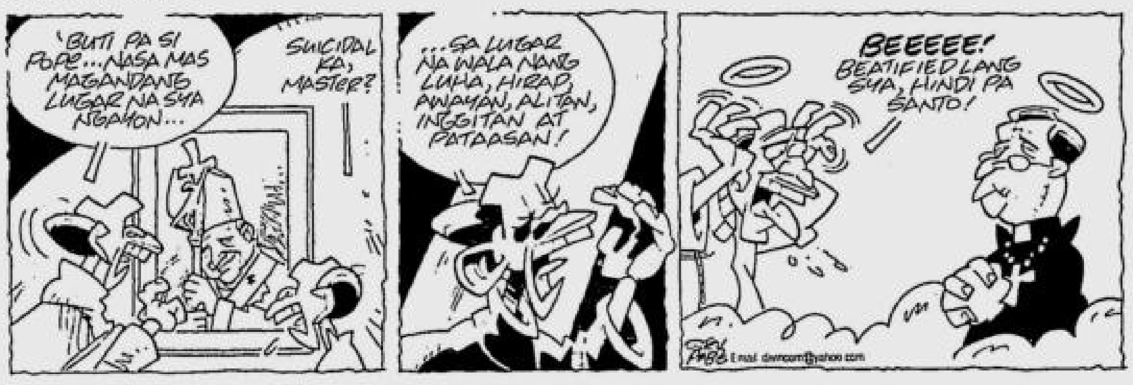
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


EARL, YOU CAN'T COME IN. YOU SHMELL LIKE A WET DOG
SLAM
I BROUGHT A TOWEL.
4-13

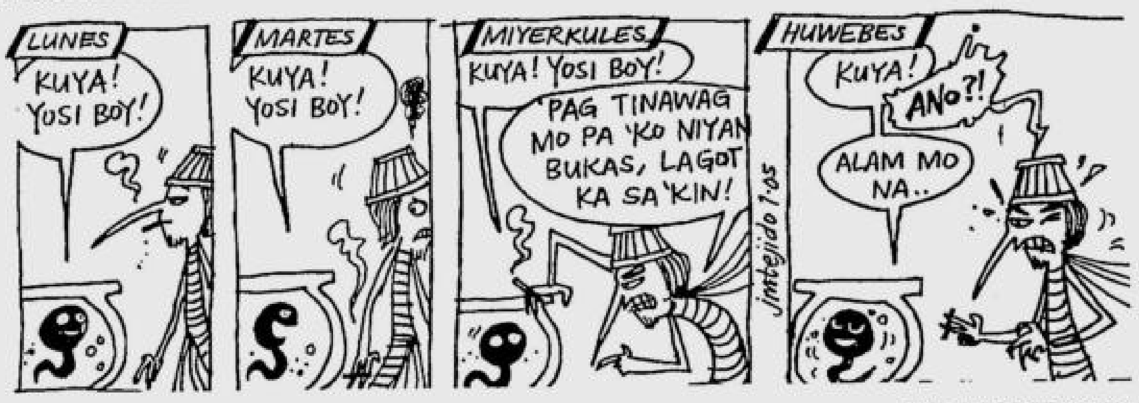
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


'BUTI PA SI POPE... NASA MAS MAGANDANG LUGAR NA SYA NGAYON...
SUICIDAL KA, MASTER?
...SA LUGAR NA WALA NANG LUHA, HIRAP, AWAYAN, ALITAN, INGGITAN AT PATAASAN!
BEEEEE! BEATIFIED LANG SYA, HINDI PA SANTO!

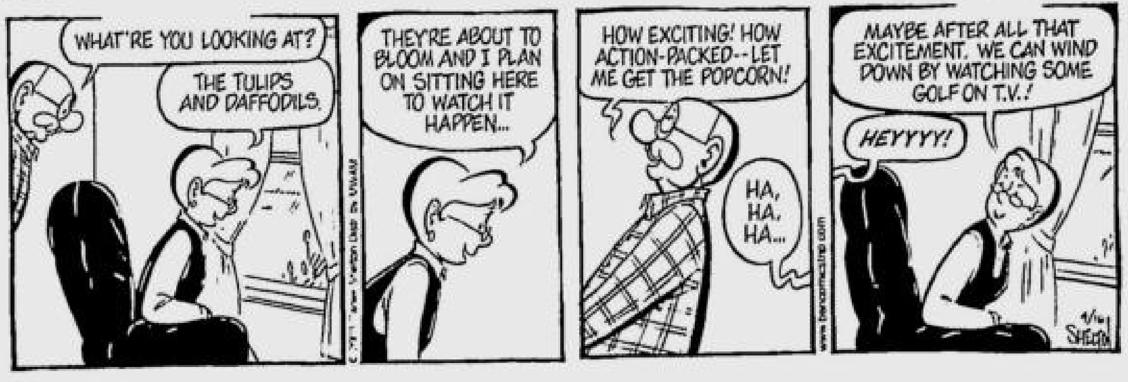
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


LUNES
KUYA! YOSI BOY!
MARTES
KUYA! YOSI BOY!
MIYERKULES
KUYA! YOSI BOY!
PAG TINAWAG MO PA 'KO NIYAN BUKAS, LAGOT KA SA 'KIN!
HUWEBES
KUYA!
ANO?!
ALAM MO NA..

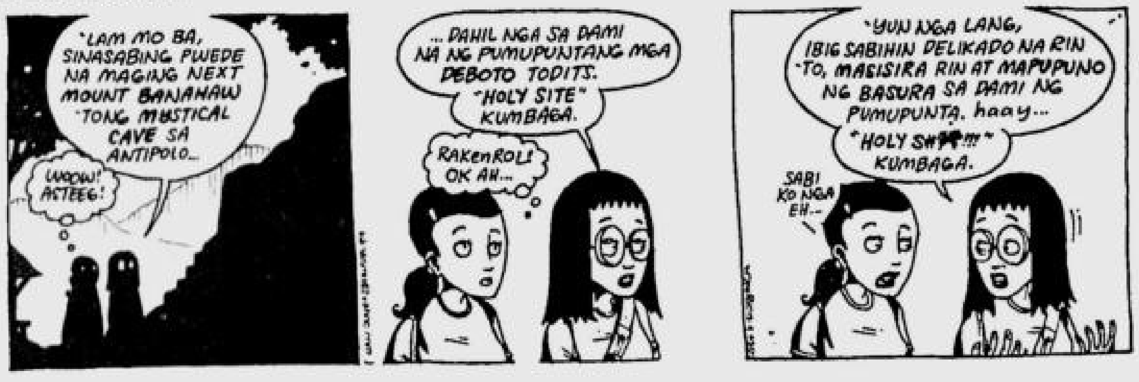
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WHAT'RE YOU LOOKING AT?
THE TULIPS AND DAFFODILS.
THEY'RE ABOUT TO BLOOM AND I PLAN ON SITTING HERE TO WATCH IT HAPPEN...
HOW EXCITING! HOW ACTION-PACKED--LET ME GET THE POPCORN!
HA, HA, HA...
MAYBE AFTER ALL THAT EXCITEMENT, WE CAN WIND DOWN BY WATCHING SOME GOLF ON T.V.!
HEYYYY!

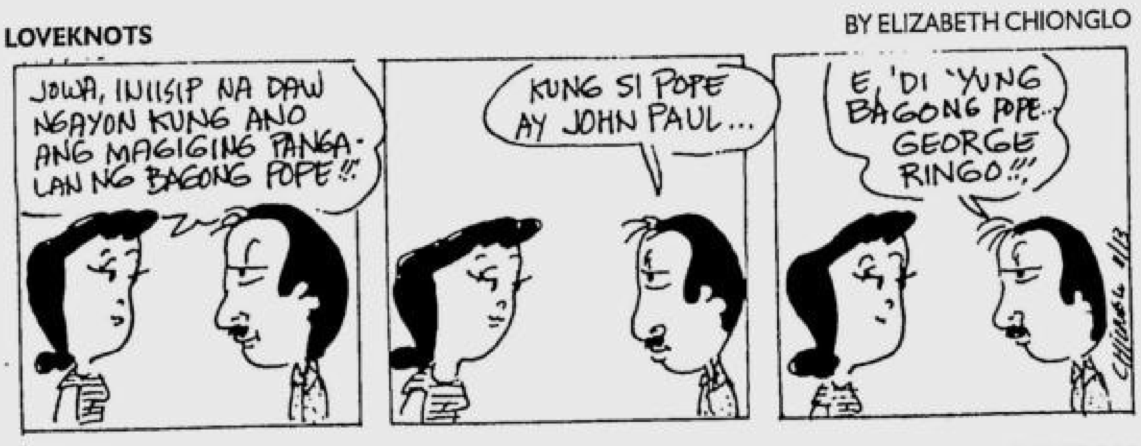
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


'LAM MO BA, SINASABING PWEDE NA MAGING NEXT MOUNT BANAHAW 'TONG MUSTICAL CAVE SA ANTIPOLO...
WOW! ASTEEG!
...DAHIL NGA SA DAMI NA NG PUMUPUNTANG MGA DEBOTO TODITS. "HOLY SITE" KUMBAGA.
RAKENROLL OK AH...
'YUN NGA LANG, IBIG SABIHIN DELIKADO NA RIN 'TO, MASISIRA RIN AT MAPUPUNO NG BASURA SA DAMI NG PUMUPUNTA. haay... "HOLY SH#!!" KUMBAGA.
SABI KO NGA EH--

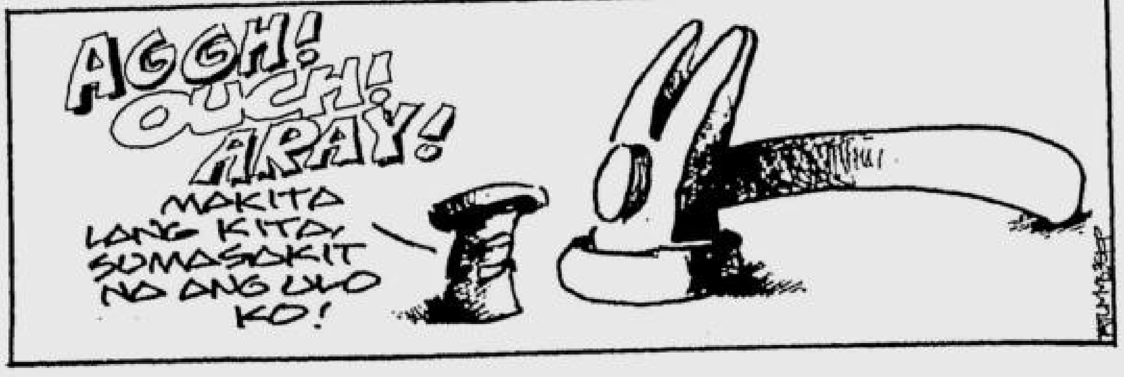
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JOWA, INIISIP NA DAW NGAYON KUNG ANO ANG MAGIGING PANGALAN NG BAGONG POPE!!
KUNG SI POPE AY JOHN PAUL...
E, 'DI 'YUNG BAGONG POPE.. GEORGE RINGO!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


AGGH! OUCH! ARAY!
MAKITA LANG KITA, SUMASAKIT NA ANG ULO KO!

WHAT we do after French class. Chris (third from left) and his older friends, Jaime from Spain, Dietmar from Germany and Stefan from Switzerland, after a hard day's work

Alejandro Christian Soler, Ateneo's summa cum laude graduate in Foreign Studies this year, aspires to be a diplomat. Go, dude!

Star on the rise

By Paula Tanada
Contributor

ALEJANDRO Christian Soler of Ateneo's 2004-2005 batch recently graduated Summa Cum Laude with a 3.87 grade point average. His greatest weapon? His passion for the social sciences.

The youngest of three boys, Soler wanted to earn the highest honors mainly to please his family and loved ones. His elder brothers took up business courses, but his love for the social sciences led him to a different path.

He took up European Studies, and now says that what he has learned "has become part of me, my life and the way I see things."

Soler says he felt like he belonged to European Studies. He enjoyed boning up on international relations and development issues, and whenever he came across literature on these subjects, "the words would jump out of the pages," he says.

The course interested him because he knew it helped promote understanding between peoples. A study that encompasses human relations, it is a "perfect and balanced mix of different social sciences, integrating Economics, Political Science, History and Communications," he says.

Ticket to Europe

Soler's passion for studying did not go unrewarded. Besides earning the highest honors, he was also given a scholarship by the French government and the Dr. Stephen Zuellig Award for Outstanding European Studies Student, which came with a round-trip ticket (with accommodations) to France, Germany Switzerland and the United Kingdom, and a chance to meet Dr. Zuellig himself.

Soler is profuse in his gratitude to everyone who contributed to his formation both as a student and as a person. He adds that his scholarships "would not have been possible without the formative training, both academically and in a personal way, that I received from Ateneo."

Soler also used to write for the Ateneo Athletics Council. He remembers the excitement of cheering for and covering the Blue Eagles in their games, and it's a memory he says he will always treasure.

He was also part of the Freshman Academic Support System and Amnesty International Pilipinas Ateneo. Outside of school, Soler actively participated in parish activities as a singer and a lector.

Chris aspires to be a Philippine diplomat. Five years from now, he sees himself "sitting behind a consular table in Europe, assisting the ambassador." Barring that, he dreams of "managing an all-Filipino football club, with the hope of taking Philippine football to new heights."

Expect Alejandro Christian Soler to make his mark in society soon.

VIVE LA FRANCE! Chris and his Mexican buddy, Benjamin

THE GRAND Babysitter: Chris babysits a friend's daughter in the middle of Grand Canyon.

Plea to my peers

From page G1

and he saves some money. He keeps on working and saving until he becomes the richest man in town, and eventually changes his name to Joe.

Joe, or The Artisan Formerly Known as Juan, leads a happy, healthy and wealthy life. His family, though, dies from hunger 10 days after Juan leaves the house. He forgot all about them in his quest for a better life and he wasn't there to help them find food.

This is what education can also do to us Filipinos. While education is empowerment, it is also a way out of here. Juan/Joe was given a way out of his dismal situation, but he didn't use his freedom to change it. He became successful, but he didn't bother to help his family escape their circumstances.

Education is an astonishingly powerful thing, especially in the Philippines. Unfortunately, people are using their diplomas to leave the country instead of serving it. Teachers are heading to the United States, using their master's degrees to get accepted by foreign schools. Med students who should be doctors in a few years are migrating to Canada and becoming nurses instead.

High school valedictorians, instead of praying to get into Ateneo or UP, are perusing SAT prep books, dreaming of Harvard and Yale's ivy-covered walls.

So this is the paradox: If we educate everyone, most of them will see it as a ticket out of the Philippines, rather than as a way to improve the country. Eventually, the only ones who will be left behind are the uneducated ones.

On the other hand, if we don't provide educational opportunities, there's little hope of us progressing at all.

Middle ground

We need to find a middle ground, a way to educate everyone and have them use their acquired skills for the good of the country.

Perhaps people are leaving because they've already dismissed the Philippines as a hopeless case, and perhaps they're right. The exchange rate has plunged from $1=P26 to $1=P56 in less than a decade. Seventy percent of Filipinos live below the poverty line, and it gets worse every year. And year in and year out, incompetent, corrupt people get elected to public office,

The youth in particular are fed up with this country's shortcomings. We can't take living in this hellhole any longer. While news about crime, corruption, poverty, and politicking blares on downstairs, we lock ourselves in our rooms, furiously scribbling in our journals about how we're going to leave after college, how we're never going to come back to the Philippines because we're going to make much better lives somewhere else.

The youth is the hope of the fatherland, said Dr. Jose Rizal. I wonder how Rizal must feel now, seeing the apathy and frustration of young people toward their country.

In this day and age, we're allowed and even encouraged to raise our opinions, to take a stand and at least try to make a difference. But for many of us, all we opt to do is sit back and let the adults ruin the country while we wait for our time to leave.

While I can't find much hope in my generation or the leaders of this country, I find it in an ancient Arabic poem:

A willow-branch reminds one that a youth
Can easily be bent toward the Truth
Old reprobates a sterner fate require
For they will straighten only in the fire

The poem says that a young person is easier to change and point in the right direction than a grownup. Which means we young people have more opportunities to set things right and start afresh.

Perhaps we can start by staying put and sticking it out with the country we call home.

'Isang prinsesa sa Malacañang'

From page G1

daldal ko pa man din! Ibig sabihin noon, doble ng kadaldalan ko ang nagawa ko na, at gagawin pa sa madaling panahon. At marami pa akong balak gawin.

Ang mga pangarap ko, kahit minsan ay hindi naging para sa sarili lamang, ngunit para sa kapakanan din ng nakararami. At ngayong pangulo na ako, ang mga pangarap ko'y nakatutok naman sa Sambayanang Pilipino… sa Bayan ko… Sa aking kaharian. Iisa-isahin ko ang aking mga pangarap—at ito'y hindi plataporma. Luma na iyan, wala nang naniniwala riyan. Lalo na ako. Ang sistemang papairalin ko ay ang sistema ko, yun na lang kasi yung parang hindi pa masyadong bulok. Pero huwag n'yo sanang isipin na mayabang ako. Matatag lang. Mas makikinig ako sa sarili ko kaysa sa iba, kasi marami diyang kunwari makikiisa, yun pala'y gusto lamang makaisa, di ba? At alam n'yo ba, mapag-puna akong tao eh. Lahat na lang nakikita ko, alam ko ang problema at magaling din ako umisip ng mabilis na solusyon, ngunit ang epekto'y pangmatagalan. Pakialamera kasi ako, eh. Pero hindi ako umuusisa lang tapos, dedma. Lahat dinidiskartehan ko, lalo na ngayon pa't Presidente na 'ko. Pero bago ang lahat, ang una kong ipinapangako, hindi para sa taumbayan, kundi para sa sarili ko—na ni minsan ay hindi ako maggugugol ng panahon sa kakangiti, kakahalik sa mga iskwater na sa loob nama'y pinandidirihan ko, at hindi ako magpapagawa ng mga karatula at patalastas na nagpapakita ng pekeng ngiti. Wala namang magagawa iyun, at 'di naman ako isang modelo, eh. Ako'y isang modelo. Modelo ng taumbayan, at ng mga lider na susunod pa sa akin. Talagang napipikon na ako sa mga nangyari. Ang iba, nauuna pa ang paglalahad ng tagumpay ng isang proyekto kuno, kaysa sa aktwal na pagpapatupad rito. Lumaki ako sa lugar na kung saan nakakatanaw ako ng mga iskwater, kaya alam ko na kung saan ako magsisimula. Pero bago ko muna pakialaman ang buhay ng may buhay, siguro yung mga malalapit muna sa akin ang una kong dapat pakialaman. Wala akong pakialam kung anuman ang sabihin ng mga kasamahan ko sa gobyerno pero talagang walang kuma-kumare sa akin. Naaalala ko noon, binigyan ko ng grade ang mga kaklase ko na bagsak, paano ang pangit naman talaga kasi ng talumpati nila! Sumama nga ang loob nila, pero iyon naman talaga ang nararapat sa kanila eh. At maliit na bagay lang iyon, 'di ko pinalampas. Paano pa itong mga malalaking bagay? Susuyurin ko muna itong mga tauhan ko sa gobyerno. Tutal, kabit-kabit na problema lang iyan eh, kahit saan ka magsimula, lahat naman uusad. Kaya habang narito ako sa taas, gagawin ko na ang dapat kong gawin. Una, susupilin ko na iyang mga korap sa gobyerno. Ang mga prominenteng tao't kumpanyang 'di nagbabayad ng buwis. Ayoko sa lahat yung mga hindi marunong makipagsabayan; mga nanggagantso. Kapag nasupil ko na yang malalaking iyan, tingnan n'yo, malaki na agad ang pagbabago sa ekonomiya. At huwag ninyong sabihing hindi ko alam ang mga iyan. Pangulo ako, eh. Dalawa lang kasi iyan. Pagtakpan mo o bistuhin mo. Pasensiya na, mahilig ako mambisto. Ikalawa, mga kakaibang "Transaksiyones." Iyang mga Abu Sayyaf na iyan, yang mga drug lord na iyan… magpakatotoo tayo, mga kumpare natin iyan dati… 'di na ngayon. Tatrabahuhin ko agad iyan. At siguradong may epekto rin agad iyan sa turismo, ekonomiya at lalo na rin sa mga usapin ng seguridad at kapayapaan. Sabi lang nila na mahirap iyon solusyunan, bakit, sinubukan na ba nila? Kasi siyempre, mahirap supilin ang sariling tropa, 'di ba? Ang problema sa Mindanao rin lang ang pag-uusapan, hindi ako aalis diyan hanggang pulido na iyan. Pakikinggan ko ang ating mga kababayang Muslim. Sigaw na nga sila nang sigaw, nagbibingi-bingihan pa. Pwes, hindi sa administrasyon ko. Matagal rin natin silang iwinalang-bahala. Pero hindi pa rin ako papayag sa ibig nilang magkaroon sila ng sarili nilang bansa. At patay na si Julian Felipe para gawan sila ng bagong pambansang awit, kaya 'di pwede. At mababawasan ng isang bituin ang bandila natin. Ang pangit naman noon, tabingi! Ang babaw ba? Hindi, kasi ibig ko ibabalik muli sa mapa ng Pilipinas ang Mindanao. At ibabalik ko muli ang Pilipinas sa mapa ng maunlad na mundo. Makikipag-kompromiso ako sa kapwa ko Pinoy sa Mindanao, at ituturing ko rin silang mga tao, 'di tulad sa iba diyan na kung tratuhin sila'y mas masaklap pa sa baboy. Tutugunan ko ang kanilang mga pangangailangan, lalo na't nauubusan na tayo ng mga taong matatapang. Lahat na lang puro plastik! Ewan ko ba, Pamela.

Napipikon talaga ako 'pag iniisip ko na pataas nang pataas ang utang natin sa ibang bansa, parang ispageti! Ako pa man din yung tipo na kahit piso lang ang inutang ay 'di mapakali hangga't di ko ito nababayaran. Parang ang bigat ng pakiramdam. Tapos nong sumasakay pa ako sa MRT at LRT na aircon na ay nag-iinit ako kasi naman utang pa rin pala iyon, 'di pa pala bayad. Nakaka-loka! Pero alam mo kasi kung lahat lumalagay sa tama, matagal nang bayad ang mga utang, kahit pa ang apo ng apo natin! Siguro naman marami nang pagbabagong susunod pagkatapos kong matugunan ang mga iyon. At 'di ko rin siyempre kakalimutang "i-pep talk" ang taumbayan na maging vigilante sa mga masasamang loob. Kapag wala na ang mga pinunong puno ng anomaliya'y siguradong mawawala na rin ang mga "kotongero" na may mas mababang katungkulan, siyempre, matakot naman sila, wala nang magtatakip sa kalokohan nila!

Edukasyon… magaling ako riyan. Iyan ang kurso ko. Nakita ko na rin ang sistema sa mga public school, nanggaling ako doon, eh. Siyempre, ngayong medyo maluwang-luwang na ang ekonomiya, siguro naman wala na masiyadong gurong lilisan. At ang sagot—pondo! Imbis na ibulsa ko, gaya ng iba'y gugugulin ko na lamang sa pagkuha ng magagaling na guro at mga pamamaraan na ginagamit ng mga bansang asensado. At akala n'yo ba mataas na ang kalidad ng mga pinakamamahalin at magagarbong mga pamantasan dito? Oo, pero pwedeng pang mas pataasin ang kalibre nito. At ang mga bata, bawal magtrabaho! Mag-aral muna, ano! Bata, matanda, bawal tumambay sa kanto. Bilang isang Kristiyano, naniniwala ako sa sabi sa Bibliya na huwag dapat bigyan ang isang tao ng isda, ngunit dapat itong turuang mangisda. Gagawa ako ng paraan upang ang lahat ng mga batugan ay magbanat ng buto, 'di lang puro otso-otso. Para ang hapunan nilang dinugua'y mula sa pawis at dugo nila. Siyempre maraming magiging janitor o basurero sa kanila, ngunit patataasin ko ang dignidad sa mga trabahong ito, gayundin ang sweldo! Aba, ang hirap yata noon! Hirap sa katawan ang puhunan! At siyempre pangangalagaan ko lalo ang mga kalusugan nila sa pamamagitan ng mas maayos na kagamitan at kasuotan at iba pang mga pamantayan.

Ang isa pang bagay na napipikon ako ay kung paano naghahari dito ang mga dayuhan. Kaya nga Pilipinas, eh—bansa ng mga Pilipino! Matagal na tayong sinakop ng mga dayuhan, pero hanggang ngayon, hawak pa rin tayo, sa mas matindi pa ngang paraan! Marami diyan kahit wala namang talento basta mestiso ay kumikita na ng libu-libo. Pinagkakaguluhan pa! Sentimyento ko iyon, pero saka ko na pakikialaman ang show biz! Uunahin ko na muna ang mga mas matitinding epekto ng kolonyal na pag-iisip. Masyado na kasi tayong umaasa sa mga foreign investors. Ang sagot ko riyan ay pababayaan ko munang maghirap tayo sandali, dahil gagawa ako ng batas na maglilimita sa importasyon ng mga produkto mula sa ibang bansa. At dapat ang mga negosyo ay mahigit 70 porsiyento ay pag-aari ng Pinoy. Mahirap sa una, pero disiplina ang kailangan ng bansang ito upang makabangon. Kung iisipin mo kasi, malaking ugat ng mga problema natin ang paglimot sa identidad natin eh. Talagang hindi tayo stateside, eh. Kaya unahin muna natin, mas bigyang prioridad ang mga residenteng kalahi ng presidente—at ako iyon—purong Pinoy! At karugtong niyan ay palalakasin ko ang kampanya sa pagtangkilik ng mga produkto natin!

Hindi ako gagawa ng maraming batas para lang may mapangalandakan ako sa susunod na eleksyon! Gagawa lang ako ng mga kaya kong ipatupad. Ang ikalawang aaksiyunan ko ay ang pagpoprotekta kina Yaya Fe na naghihirap sa Iraq at kay Yaya Celia na nasa Saudi, at ang iba pang mga yaya na siyang dahilan bakit humihinga pa ang ekonomiya ng Pilipinas. Kung noo'y pinaplantsa, binubugbog, nilalapastangan ang mga OFW na Pinoy, subukan lang nila at ewan ko na lang kung saan sila pupulutin. Alaga namin yung mga dayuhan dito na tumitira sa mga pinakasosyal na hotel at ang mga nagko-concert dito na dinadagsa ng tao. Kung noon, ang mga Pinoy na naninilbihan sa inyo'y binubusabos, gagawin ko na silang aking prayoridad—.mga bagong boss.

At ang huling batas na ipapatupad ko (at siguradong napapanahon ito) ay ang batas na nagbabawal sa mga hindi nakatapos ng kolehiyo na tumakbo at bumoto. Hindi lang ang mga kandidato, kundi rin ang mga botante, siyempre! Kaya lahat ay talagang mapipilitang mag-aral ngayon!

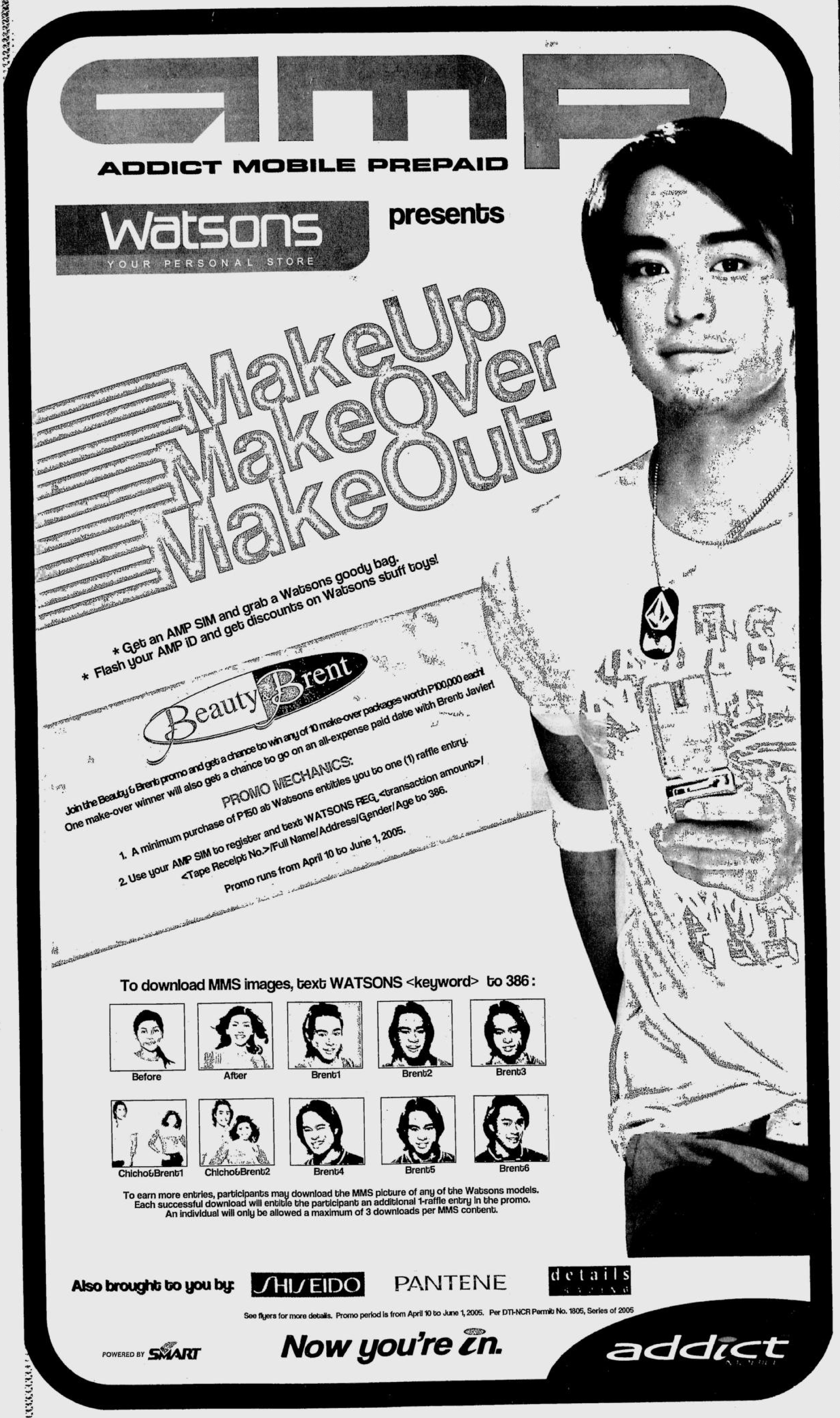
Bago ako bumaba sa puwesto ay mangangampanya ako para sa family planning. Bukod sa pagtugon sa problema ng populasyon, gusto ko mawala ang mga kongregasyon ng mga adik at kriminal. Mawala na ang lahat ng epal. Pero sino ba naman ako para sabihing huwag kayo magtalik, 'di ba? Siguro sa pagkakataong ito, iuutos ko na iyon sa mga maliliit na sector sa lipunan, sa bawat baranggay, na palakasin ang pangangampanya para sa family planning. Hindi ako salungat sa pagkakaroon ng maraming bata sa pamilya, gusto kong masigurado na matutugunan ang kapakanan ng bawat isang bata sa lipunan na ito. Sayang kasi eh, ang dami nating mga talentong hindi napapagyaman. Para bang ang mga mayayaman lang ang may karapatang mabuhay sa mundo.

Siyempre, maisisingit ko rin ang pagtatanim sa puso't isipan ng bawat Pilipino na mahalin ang wika natin. Lagi na lang tayo nag-aaral ng Ingles, Spanish, French pero ikinakahiya ang sariling wika. Naniniwala kasi akong isa iyan sa mga bagay na magbubuklod sa bayang ito. Pero siyempre, dapat din tayo matutong magsalita ng ibang lenguahe hindi para sabihing sosyal tayo o may alam, kundi para masabi natin na nadaig natin ang iba, dahil mas bihasa tayo sa pagsasalita sa wika nila, 'di ba?

Hay, napakarami ko pang gusting gawin, gaya ng mga problema sa droga, sa kulungan, at iba pa. Pero tinira ko muna yaong mga ugat ng mga problema, gusto ko kasing padaliin ang trabaho para sa mga susunod sa akin, na baka katulad ng iba na kesyo mahirap daw gawin. Pero tutulong-tulong pa rin ako siyempre sa mga susunod sa yapak ko. Marami kasi akong ideya eh. Pero dahil sa maiksi ang panahon, yun pa lang ang kaya ng powers ko.

Grabe, namayat ako sa terminong ito! Pero napakaligaya ko sapagkat nalutas ko ang ilan sa mga problema ng bansa nang harap-harapan. Tatakbo pa kaya ako sa susunod? Hindi na, hindi naman ako gahaman, ano! At ni isang sentimo'y wala akong kinupit mula sa kaban ng bayan, alam niyo iyan! Mahirap tiisin pero 'di ako bumigay! Hay, babalik na ako sa tahanan ko kung saan noon kapag dumungaw ka ay santambak na iskwater ang nakikita ko. Pero 'di na ngayon, isang napakaganda't kumpletong sports plaza na! Ang daming malulusog na bata ang naglalaro (at mga gwapong basketball players ang naglalaro)!

Pero hindi ako tanga, gagawa ako ng paraan upang yumaman din, 'no! Iibahin ko ang kurso ng mga tao. Kung sila, ginagamit na pintuan ang show biz para makapasok sa pulitika, ako, gagamitin ko ang pulitika, para maging artista! Tutal sikat naman na ako ngayon, mag-aartista na ako! Iba ako, pulitika muna bago show biz! Pero bago iyan, tatapusin ko na muna siguro ang naiwan kong kurso sa kolehiyo. Isang taon na lamang iyon! Pero abangan ninyo ako, malapit na akong maging "star"!



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